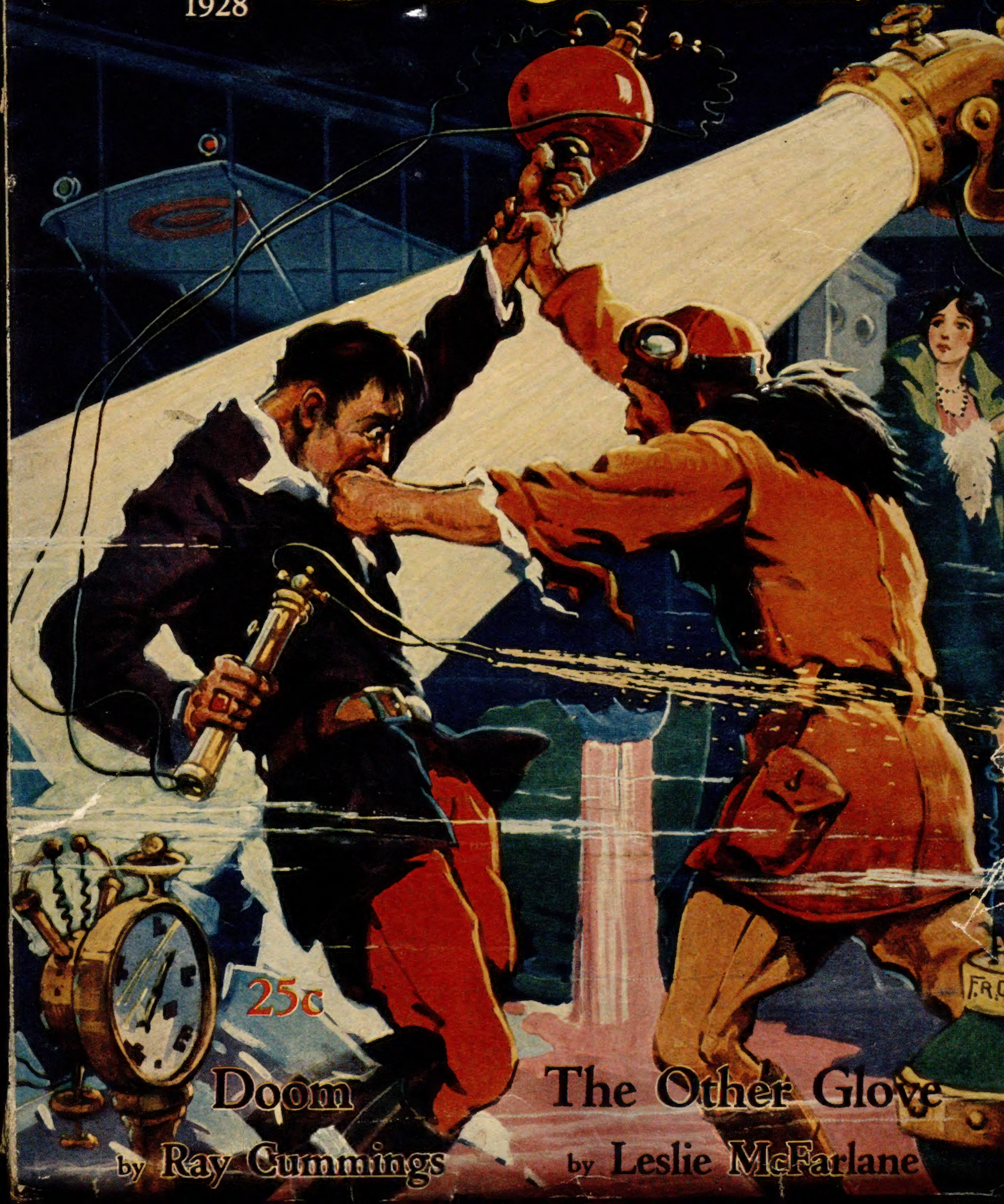
Mystery · Detective · Western · Adventure

MYSTERY STORIES

April
1928



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Doom
by Ray Cummings

The Other Glove
by Leslie McFarlane

Professor Maurice Scholder

TO MEN *with* DYING HAIR:

I can save you from baldness!

MODERN science has definitely determined that there is no excuse for baldness if you will treat your scalp properly before the mother roots of your hair have starved and died. Nature has ways of warning when certain parts of our body are sick or undernourished. In the case of our hair the **danger signals are falling hair, dandruff and itching scalp.** If neglected these conditions will result in thin, lifeless hair—and eventual baldness. You must act **now**—in time to save the mother roots.

Home Treatment in a few minutes a day

The newspapers in this country and abroad have proclaimed Professor Scholder as the marvel of his profession. Now, in his advancing years, Professor Scholder is not content to call a halt to the accomplishment of a long and honorable career. He is retiring gradually from treating patients at his Clinic, but is devoting three days a week to treating patients by his **Home Treatment System.** His successful cures are numbered in the thousands, and among his grateful patients are men and women of highest prominence.

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The Professor Scholder Institute, Inc.
101 West 42nd St., New York City

Dear Professor Scholder:

The dandruff has disappeared entirely, the scalp is loose, and my hair is no longer dry. My hair is now growing back again. At first a light fuzz appeared, but it is now getting dark and I can almost see it growing longer every day.

I cannot begin to say how wonderful your treatments are. They certainly have saved my hair for me and I am more than thankful.

(Signed) A. L. S., Jersey City, N. J.

Pres. Roosevelt
One of Prof. Scholder's many famous patients

"I am very much pleased with your treatment. Only the first month is ending, and my hair is getting better and better every day. The falling of my hair has become less and I can see some new hair growing in."
G. O., New York City.

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M. S., Winnipeg, Canada.

"I have not applied the last month's treatment as I should have done, regularly, altho my hair is in excellent condition and my head is covered with new hair"
T. S. S., New Rochelle, N. Y

"I am going to ask a favor of you — to continue my treatment. There is nothing I have tried that would do any good until I got your first treatment." J. A. W., Columbia, S.C.

"I most profoundly thank the star that made me write to you. You are saving my hair, and it is not maybe! When I told my friends, a few months ago, that I would grow new hair, they gave me the horse laugh, but I had unlimited faith in you. And I have noticed that you take most particular pains with the individual.
E. J., Grand Rapids, Mich.

and there are thousands more

FREE ADVICE COUPON

Mail today, enclosing samples of your hair, to
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The Professor Scholder Institute, Inc., 101 West 42nd Street, New York

Professor Maurice Scholder: I am taking advantage of your offer to advise me regarding my hair with the understanding that you will tell me what to do to save my hair and renew its growth. This, however, places me under no obligation whatever.

Name ....

Address ....

City .... *State* ....

M.S-4

April
1928

Vol. XIV
No. 1

Mystery Stories

CONTENTS

COVER DESIGN (Illustrating "DOOM") .... F. R. Glass
DOOM (Complete Novelette) .... Ray Cummings 3
Exciting events take place in the clouds above a stricken world.
NO STORY (Short Story) .... H. M. Sutherland 36
Telling of the strange way in which justice is sometimes achieved.
THE PHANTOM REPORTER .... Robert W. Sneddon 45
THE OTHER GLOVE (A Two-Part Story—Part I.) .... Leslie McFarlane 46
An old man is killed—a young man is suspected—and a girl tries to save her lover.
FAMOUS UNSOLVED MYSTERIES—The Hunting Lodge at Mayerling .... (Series) .... Alvin F. Harlow 65
Sentimentalists believed it a suicide pact, but history has some other facts to submit.
BURGLARS' CHARMS 74
THE WITCHES' SABBATH .... Arthur F. Harris 75
SNOW MEN (Short Story) .... Mark Plum 76
In which a fiery Sicilian meets the frigid breed of the North.
THE SPY MASTER—Brutes of Steel (Series) .... Richard Wilmer Rowan 85
Frankenstein again proves a boomerang.
THE GREAT CANAL STREET ROBBERY (Short Story) .... Murray Leinster 103
The Napoleon of Crime meets his Waterloo in an original manner.
THE PORT OF MISSING AVIATORS (Article) .... Orville H. Kneen 113
Are there "death-spots" in the air, elsewhere than in the Pacific, waiting to claim heroic victims?
THE LAST LAUGH (Short Story) .... George Fielding Eliot 121
When his past caught up with him he didn't know what to do; but his wife knew, and did it.
THE GENT IN THE DERBY HAT (Short Story) .... Robert Carse 128
Because of his startling head-gear, Western desperadoes thought they could put something over on him.
HOW TO DETECT A MURDERER 133
THE HORROR OF THE HEIGHT (Short Story) .... Sidney Horler 134
Flames burst forth—and devils are liberated to do their will with helpless mortals.
HORRIBLE LOVE CHARMS OF THE ANCIENT IRISH 144
THE MOST MYSTERIOUS HAPPENING OF MY LIFE (Department) 145
"An Appeal to Friendship," by Mrs. Franklin Harris; "The Death Battle," by Mrs. W. L. English.
CHANGELING CHILDREN 147
THE MYSTERY CLUB (Department) 148
Another opportunity to pit your wits against those of the clever Everard Jason.
WE TELL OUR READERS 151
OUR READERS TELL US 152

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The Best Western Mystery Story of the Year

YES, we mean just that!

We know that most of the so-called "big" magazines print Western stories, and that all of them have some mystery and suspense.

We know that there are a dozen or more publications that print little else than Western stories.

But we venture to say that, no matter how many you read, you won't find one story that will grip you and thrill you and mystify you the way *Murray Leinster's* long complete novelette in the May Number of MYSTERY STORIES, THE KILLING AT THUNDER MOUNTAIN, will grip you and thrill you and mystify you.

* * *

Sam Burroughs, deputy sheriff, is hurrying to the placer mines of the little mountain town to protect the gold shipments. Many hold-ups have been taking place and a number of men have been killed, with no clues as to the identity of the outlaws.

In a shack on the outskirts of Thunder Mountain the deputy finds a dead man on whom there are papers which seem to identify him as Sam Burroughs.

The real Sam Burroughs determines to discover what it is all about and who is committing the depredations.

He finds out, too, but his task is not an easy one.

And by the same token, you'll find it just as hard to guess the outcome.

Try and do it!

* * *

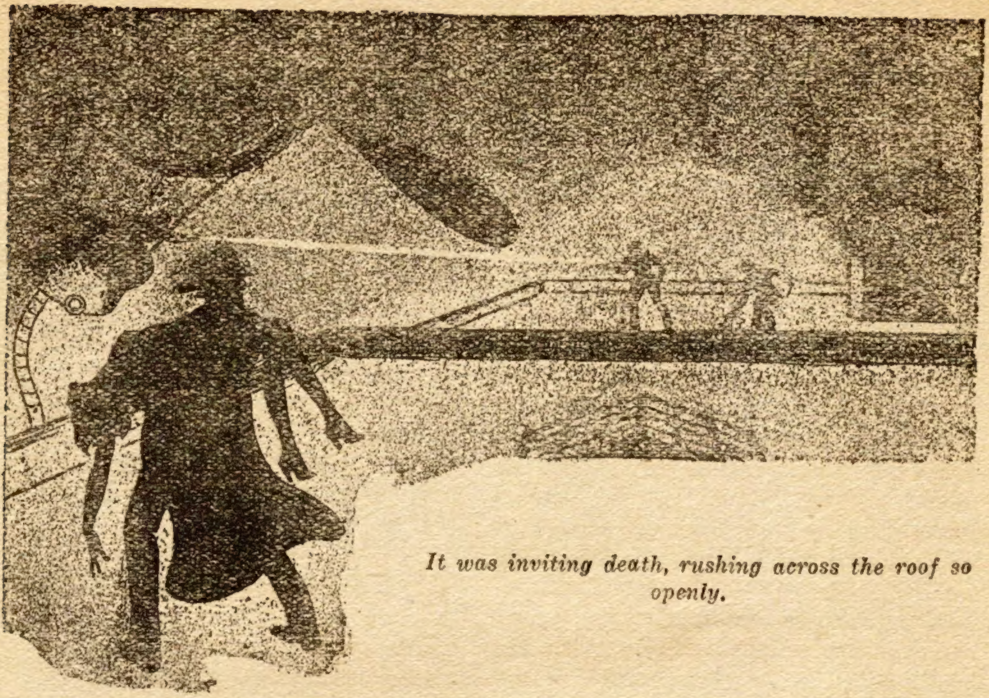
SEA MAGIC, by *Charles G. Booth;* FOUR MEN WHO SAW, by *Oscar Schisgall;* APPLES IS APPLES, by *J. U. Giesy;* DEAD OR ALIVE, by *Walter W. Liggett,* are some of the short stories that give this number unusual distinction.

The romantic tale of the Archduke John of Austria and his middle-class sweetheart is the FAMOUS UNSOLVED MYSTERY of the month. If you have been reading these fact stories by *Alvin F. Harlow,* you'll understand that we are praising the story highly when we say that it's the most interesting one that Mr. Harlow has given us.

Don't miss the second and concluding instalment of *Leslie McFarlane's* THE OTHER GLOVE. It has a smashing climax that you'll enjoy.

Other features, too.

Altogether the May Number of MYSTERY STORIES will be found very satisfying.



It was inviting death, rushing across the roof so openly.

Doom!

A COMPLETE NOVELETTE

By RAY CUMMINGS

A night and a day of unutterable horror. What would the sequel be? The fate of New York—of the whole country—of the entire world—hung in the balance; and much depended on the smile of a girl.

CHAPTER I

THE TERRIBLE NIGHT

MY NAME is Charles Jones. On July 12, 1938, which afterward came to be known throughout the world as the Terrible Night, I was twenty-four years old, working as a clerk with the Latin-American exporting firm of Westhouse & Harrison, New York City.

This night of July 12th-13th started like many other midsummer evenings. It was hot and oppressive. A thunderstorm threatened, but it did not break. The stars gleamed in a dark purple sky. At the horizon the storm hung motionless, with distant lightning flares and a low, muttering thunder. The city was breathless.

About eight-thirty in the evening I went uptown to see Mollie and Mike O'Flaherty. Mike was, and still is, a New York police detective. At that time he was connected with what they called the Yorkville squad. Mollie is his sister. They lived together in a little flat near Second Avenue, in the Eighties.

I walked east from the subway station. The cross street was fairly crowded with people. It was too breathless an evening to stay indoors. I was an eye-witness to what may have been the first of the new murders. A man was walking along the sidewalk ahead of me. Children were playing at the curb. Somebody had a hose with a stream of water, and the kids were splashing in it. The pedestrian—an average-looking man—stopped to watch them. He was standing near the shadow of an alley entrance. From the alley a lurking figure darted—a man in a long black cloak. I saw a thin, bare arm flash from beneath the cloak—a hand with a huge ring on one of its fingers. I thought I saw a soundless, tiny red flash dart from the ring.

That was all. The cloaked figure leaped back into the alley. The pedestrian watching the children had not been touched. There was no sound of a fire-arm—nothing. But suddenly he crumpled and fell. I was quite near him. I saw his face, with a sort of bewildered look on it. He fell in a heap and lay still. Dead. There wasn't a mark to show what had killed him.

THAT was the first. But when, after the excitement calmed down, I reached my friends' flat to tell them of the strange occurrence, we soon learned that many other similar murders were taking place all over the city.

We sat in the living-room. Mike always was an enthusiastic radio fan. At first the nearby broadcasters were all engaged with musical programs, but they didn't keep it up very long. One by one they dropped off and began broadcasting news of the murders. By ten o'clock there was nothing else on the air. Mike's superior had phoned for him, but had canceled the order almost at once. This was beyond detective duties. By ten o'clock they were ordering out troops to patrol the city streets from end to end. Pedestrians were ordered to remain indoors.

"My God!" said Mike. "What sort of a thing is this that's hittin' us?"

EVEN now, at the very beginning of it, there was an aspect to the affair more than alarming. A gruesome, fiendish, inhuman quality to it that struck a chill even to the stoutest heart. Mike was a big, burly six-footer, with a square-jawed, red face, flaming red hair, and a voice like a bull. Afraid of no man. But his eyes as he stared at me now held a puzzled look that was very close to fear. If he could have gotten out and with that ham-like fist have smashed some human offender's face, it would have been all right. But there seemed nothing here to attack. A hundred men and half as many women had dropped dead in the city's streets within the past hour. A few men in black cloaks had been seen. A hand, with a strange ring, occasionally was mentioned by eye-witnesses.

None of the murderers had been caught. The murders had happened quickly, in widely separated sections. There was no rhyme or reason to them. The victims were average citizens, and there was no apparent explanation why they should be killed.

Mollie sat beside me, while Mike operated the radio. One station after another broadcast the news, and orders from the authorities to the citizens:

"Stay indoors! Bar your doors and windows! Allow no visitors!"

Mollie gripped me. "What *is* it, Charlie? What does this mean?"

A small girl, Mollie. Just eighteen, this terrible night. Small and slender, with a mass of chestnut hair, and a face as beautiful as that of any queen that ever walked the earth. And blue eyes. Smiling, Irish eyes. But there was no smile in them now. A wonderment, with a lurking terror. I imagine that expression was in my own—and in millions of other eyes throughout the world that night.

BY TEN-THIRTY the troops were patrolling the city. The theaters were emptied. Overworked taxis, jammed, with figures clinging to the running-boards, were struggling to get the people home. The subways, the elevated trains, and all the suburban ferries must have been horribly crowded. The Holland Tunnel was a tangle.

"*Taxi at Seventy-first and Broadway*"—the radio announcer's voice held a quiver. "*Driver must have dropped dead at the wheel. Collided with a trolley. Seven people killed.*"

The first of the traffic accidents! That motorman must also have been dead before the collision—running the trolley full speed into the taxi.

It was only the first of the traffic accidents. News of them now began to pour in from everywhere. Drivers dropping dead, the vehicles running amuck through the crowded streets, to end with a crash.

At the news of the first accident, Mike leaped to the telephone. "I'll get the chief! If they think I'm goin' to sit here doin' nothing——"

But the telephones were too busy to receive outgoing calls. Every subscriber was being warned to stay indoors.

By eleven-thirty river accidents were reported. Crowded ferries collided. Several were drifting aimlessly, with dead pilots at the helm. Then a horrible subway crash . . .

About this time fires broke out in several parts of the city. The huge motor fire-trucks answered the call, but most of them never reached their destinations. Rushing swiftly through the streets, they crashed. An eye-witness afterward told what he had seen of one of them, a great ladder-truck. It passed a corner at forty miles an hour. A black-cloaked figure appeared. The driver of the ladder-truck slumped at the wheel. The truck wavered and clashed.

Special trains were now hurriedly being made up at all the railway terminals. By midnight the troops could not keep the people off the streets. Panic-stricken throngs gathered. Refugees began to mob the railway and tube stations, striving to get out of the city. But then there was a tube accident. . . .

Soon after midnight every moving vehicle was ordered to halt. It was too dangerous. But the bridges were kept open, and across them black streams of panic-stricken people flowed all night. There were no deaths reported except on Manhattan Island. Safety seemed to lie beyond those bridges.

The radio broadcasters kept at it steadily. A chaos was everywhere, but the radio, the telephone, and the telegraph seemed immune to disaster. Whatever agency was behind all this evidently wanted the news to circulate unhampered. A fiendish guiding hand—a master criminal. We were soon to know him. A criminal fiendishly inhuman but mortal.

About midnight Mike was called out. His chief had been trying to get him for over an hour. The force was disorganized. The authorities had as yet no idea of what to do, but every available man was needed.

"Patrol duty," Mike said as he turned from the 'phone. His face was very solemn. I know it was in his mind at that moment that this was some supernatural thing he was going out to fight.

Mollie flung her arms about him. "Be careful, Mike. Don't—don't take any chances."

"Sure not." He kissed her and grinned at me—but it was a very weak grin. "I'll be back—God knows when. You'll be stayin' here, Charlie?"

"Yes," I told him. "We'll wait for you here."

Mollie had run to get his flashlight. "Thanks, kid. That's right. I might be needin' it."

He blew a kiss at Mollie and was gone. How little we realized what strange and fearsome things were to happen before we three were to be together again; under what weird and desperate circumstances we were to be reunited!

Mollie and I were left alone now in the little flat. We stood at the hall door, listening to the heavy tramp of Mike's feet as he descended. The front door banged. Then silence, save for the continuous shouting of crowds in the street outside, and the drone of our radio.

That night seemed endless. The events of a lifetime crowded into it. Mollie and I sat by the radio, her cold little hand in mine, both of us wondering what next and still more terrible event would be disclosed.

"*London*——" said the announcer.

The radio buzzed off into silence. It whined and snapped, as though afflicted with what they used to call static. Mollie twirled the knobs. By some chance she picked up a London station. It came in clearly. They were announcing the tragic events transpiring in New York. And interspersed with that was London news. Murders there! Not so many—fifty, perhaps. And half a dozen railway accidents. Black-cloaked men had been seen. A hand, always with a big ring on one of its fingers. Uncannily alert, shot at, occasionally wounded doubtless, yet not one had dropped.

IT WAS all a chaos, both in London and New York. Perhaps some of the assassins had been killed, but no bodies were brought in. No one stopped to think of that—or dared investigate a fallen figure. There was an uncanniness about it all. The police—all people—were stricken with the confusion of terror. A few abandoned cloaks were found the next day in New York, but that was all.

London was terrorized by its own murders and by news of the chaos in New York. The announcer said something about a *"Fiend! Doom! Doom is at hand!"*

But the station went dead before we could understand.

"Doom," echoed Mollie blankly. "He said: *'It's the Fiend——'* "

"Try another station. Try Chicago."

We could not get Chicago. There seemed an interference now on the air. A hissing, a snapping—sometimes a long, unearthly whine. Then we got a station—I never learned which one. We heard only a fragment: *"New York and London—no deaths anywhere else. The Fiend said he would stop at dawn. The night is over in London."*

I glanced at my watch. One o'clock. It was six A. M. in London. True enough, the night—

this first terrible night—for them was past.

"Charlie, if only it were past for us! Mike out there——"

I could visualize New York as I knew it to be at that moment. Not a train, not a vehicle, moving. Ferries drifting aimlessly in the river—the frantic harbor control—soldiers patrolling the streets, fighting with panic-stricken crowds.

We could hear those crowds outside now. A shot! Then another! God knows under what stress some trooper had been forced to fire into the mob. From the front window we could see the jam down on Second Avenue. Police and soldiers trying to quiet the milling crowd.

AT ONE-THIRTY there was a panic around the Pennsylvania Station. A hundred thousand people were there trying to get trains to take them out of the city. But there were no trains. A panic ensued in which hundreds were trampled to death.

It was about this time that the radio, the telephone, and the electric lights throughout the city went dead. Darkness was everywhere—a blank, gruesome darkness in which terror-stricken crowds fought aimlessly.

The city, stripped of all its normal light and sounds, was suddenly uncanny. Even up here in the flat we could feel it. To my overwrought imagination it seemed a vast graveyard of giant tombs, with restless ghostly occupants surging out, wailing into the night.

In the darkness Mollie was whimpering a little. I could feel her trembling against me.

"Easy, Mollie! Keep your nerve. It'll be all right."

Futile words! We were beyond all words—all theory.

I found a candle and lighted it. Shadows sprang up around us in the small living-room—black, monstrous shadows which seemed to hold things fearsome, supernatural. But they were only the shadows of Mollie and me as we huddled over the spot of candle-light.

I tried to laugh. "It gets your nerves — imagination — but all we have to do is stay put right here. Safe enough indoors . . . "

But Mike was out there in the black panic of the city. I could feel Mollie shudder.

"In here," she whispered. "Oh, Charlie, I'm afraid—afraid! Do you think we should go out—go somewhere——"

"My God, no!"

But I could feel that same urge myself. Get out—away from these shadows, these pressing walls. It was that same urge that had sent the crowds to the streets. I realized that. And realized, too, that most of the deaths had been caused by this roaming abroad.

Yet the impulse to escape was almost irresistible. An idea occurred to me.

"Mollie, there's a stairway up to the roof, isn't there?"

"Yes."

"Let's go up—take a look. I guess you're right—anything's better than sitting here."

THE flat was on the top floor of the house. We went up a flight to the roof—a quadrangle with a parapet. No one else was up here. We were higher than most of the adjacent roofs. The night was steaming, oppressive, breathless. There was no moon. The deep purple dome of the sky gleamed with its millions of stars.

We stood in the pale starlight, on the tin roof. The city was spread beneath us, unnaturally dark—a dead sea of buildings with black canyons for streets.

Mollie still clung to me. "Charlie, listen!"

The silence was uncanny. The normal voice of the city—the mingled sounds of all its traffic—was stilled. The horrible silence oppressed us. Again I had the feeling of listening in a graveyard, and hearing—ghosts. From far down in the black streets faint cries floated up, like wraiths of human voices in terror. Mike once tried to tell me a little of what he saw in these streets that night. I won't recount it. Such things are better forgotten.

"Look!" murmured Mollie. She stood beside me like a small, slim statue, edged with the wan starlight. I had never seen her more beautiful. Tense, with upraised head and an arm upflung. The terror was gone from her face. A sort of stern grimness had come to her, as though up here, underneath the stars, she were lifted above the pettiness of fear. It stayed with her, that grimness, throughout all those terrible hours which were now upon us. And never again did I see her show a vestige of fear. A real girl; more than a girl—a woman now, ready to face whatever might come; steadfast and loyal always to the two men she loved.

"Charlie—look!"

To the north and west—I imagine it was off in the upper Broadway section—a red glare was rising. A radiance at first; then a surging black cloud of smoke rolling upward, hanging low like a black shroud, with no wind to blow it away. Red tongues of flame were at its base; then a yellow blur; then red again. We must have stood half an hour or more watching it. A huge fire—a city block perhaps. But it was soundless. No fire engines could have gone to fight it. We did not know until afterward that no automobiles could run that night. Everything electrical was now paralyzed; every motor depending upon electric ignition was useless.

The air mails were not running. The European passenger airplane had been scheduled to arrive at its Long Island terminal about two A. M. Its twelve motors had gone dead ten miles off the coast, and it had descended. It was lying out there now on the sea.

AT TWO A. M. Mollie and I were still on the roof. I had gone down into the blackness of the flat to see if Mike had returned, and to leave a note telling him where we were. When I got back to the roof Mollie was gazing upward, transfixed. There had not been a cloud in the sky a few moments before. The early evening storm at the horizon had vanished. The smoke of the recent fire had gradually dissipated. But there was a cloud up there now. Far up, directly over our heads—a gray curtain, like a fog bank.

"It—just came," Mollie whispered. "Came in layers—like smoke—blotting out the stars." And she added slowly: "Charlie, *it came from above!* Like smoke—*coming down!*"

I could see it growing, coming down in puffs—spreading waves of it, until, at a height of eight or ten thousand feet above the city, it hung like dead-gray folds of a canopy.

We stood tense, silent, watching it. The stars over a great patch embracing more than half the sky were gone. A minute—ten minutes—I do not know. But I recall that I felt very queer. Oppressed, half panting for breath. But it was more than that. I was trembling, as though a palsy were upon me. I seemed humming inside—every fiber of me, quivering, vibrating, humming with a soundless hum. A tiny, infinitely rapid vibration. I could not hear it, but I could feel it, unmistakably.

The building felt it also—a vibration in the air, communicating its tiny movement to the solid steel girders of the house. The roof was trembling—quivering. Mollie swayed a little. A thought flashed to me. A vibration like this, continued, intensified, would bring down every structure in the city.

"Oh!" murmured Mollie. She was still staring upward. From the gray curtain overhead, a spot of light broke through. It spread out and downward; fan-shaped, a gray, dim radiance. Then it seemed to be taking form. A giant hand; thin, bony fingers spread out like menacing claws over the city. It was very faint, blurred, unreal as a vision. A gigantic symbol of doom! A monstrous, menacing hand, seemingly magnified from some distant, small reality.

"Mollie," I whispered, "that comes from above! Comes down that spot of light—from behind the cloud-curtain!"

A sudden calmness was on me, as it had come to Mollie an hour past. This was nothing supernatural. A light-reflection from above. A magnified image. This was no gruesome, ghostly menace. The thought steadied me.

Mollie was murmuring: "What could be up there?"

"Look!"

The giant hand was plainer now. Lean, strong, bony fingers, brown-skinned, with a thin growth of black hair. A lurid cast of green was in that menacing hand. On the index finger was a broad, square ring, with a strange insignia. I recognized the ring. One like this had been upon the hand of that black-cloaked figure in the street.

The ring was dark up there in the sky. But suddenly a red spot of light glowed in it. An instant while I felt the roof beneath our feet tremble more violently. But only an instant; then the red flare died. The hand was melting. The gray fog curtain seemed dissipating.

FROM downstairs in the house the sound of a voice floated up to us.

"Charlie——" Mollie began.

"It's Mike!" I cried.

We started toward the stairs. It was from our flat, but not Mike's voice, I soon realized. And then we caught the words:

"*A radio announcement! A radio announcement!*"

It was Mollie's radio, which she had left tuned into one of the stations when the air went dead. We hurried down.

"*A radio announcement!*" The three words were repeated over and over. But nothing else came.

"Try another station," I suggested.

Every station was the same. The same words, the same quiet, grim voice. I knew then that this was not the normal radio. All the stations were dead. This voice was using a universal wave-length. It ran the entire audible range—louder, softer, but always audible. A moment of silence, then came the announcement—those dread words which under normal circumstances would have been laughed at, but which now struck the whole civilized world into awe.

"*This is the Master. You understand? Master of you all. I've shown you to-night a little of my power. To-morrow night—here and in London—I'll show you more. Then I'll give you my orders. They* *are very simple. Prepare to obey them, you governments of America and England—I'm talking to you! Obey me—the Master—or you and all your people are doomed. It's money I'm after—don't worry over your national peace and security. Money! A ransom in exchange for your lives. You'll pay it—you richest governments of the world! Pay it or you are doomed!"*

The voice died away. The radio was crackling, whining. I reached forward and turned its knob. Behind me I heard a low cry. A scuffle! A black-cloaked figure was in the room—vague in the shadows of our small candle! A man with hooded face. He had seized Mollie; his cloak was over her head, strangling her scream.

I leaped. His arm and his hand came from the cloak. I remember a tiny, soundless red flash.

The world faded into silence and blackness as I crashed to the floor.

CHAPTER II

THE FIGHT ON THE ROOF

I WAS out about only a minute, but it seemed an hour or more. Fantastic dreams in which, through a black abyss, I was falling. When I came to, I was lying on the living-room rug. The candle was still lighted. I realized then that not much time had passed. The candle looked just about as I remembered it—not burned down to any noticeable extent.

Mollie! She was the first conscious thought I had. I sat up, trying to remember what had happened. A black-cloaked man had been holding her. I remembered seeing his hand, a ring on it; a soundless red flash from the ring. The flash had struck me down. I recalled vividly how I had felt. The shock of a vibration striking me. It had been the same as that which Mollie and I had felt on the roof-top, only a thousand times more intense. An instantaneous tingling all over me; a shattering of the nerve controls; a blank instant in which vividly I felt that my brain cells, conscious and subconscious, had lost control of every muscle and nerve center; then blackness.

This, then, was what had killed the people who were murdered that night. Evidently I had not been hit fully by the vibration—or perhaps this assassin's weapon had been less powerful.

I sat up, and found myself seemingly uninjured. It was then that I noticed the candle. A minute ago Mollie and her abductor had been here! The thought brought me to my feet. Apathy, confusion, fell from me. It was not too late!

I reeled dizzily; a nausea swept me. But then the room steadied. I listened. There was no sound. The little flat was black. The great city around me was black. The street outside seemed empty for the first time in hours. No cries. I stood for an instant at the open window. Stars overhead; a dim black canyon below me. A blank, weird silence.

It had been no more than a minute since I recovered consciousness. I was unarmed. Mike had taken his automatic with him. If he had other weapons here, I did not know of them, and I decided I would not wait to search.

Carrying the candle, I rushed quickly through the rooms. No sign of Mollie or her abductor. They had gone out undoubtedly by the hall door, which I found ajar. I extinguished the candle, and dropped it, with matches, into my pocket. Heaven knows, venturing abroad into this black tomb of a city, I would need it. I had no conscious plan. Mollie was gone—I would follow. The hopelessness of it did not strike me then.

THE radio was dead. I stopped upon impulse at the telephone. It did not even hum; it was wholly dead. I seized a carving knife from the kitchen, lighting a match to find it. Then I stepped into the black upper hallway. At once I heard a sound. I stood frozen. A footstep, down a flight or two. Was it coming up or going down? I could not tell. I moved a trifle and struck a milk bottle standing on the concrete hall floor. It crashed.

The sound downstairs stopped at once. I cursed my awkwardness. If it were Mollie's abductor coming back up—perhaps to make sure I was dead—he now was warned. Peering over the balustrade, I could see nothing. But I could feel that he was down there a flight or two, standing as I was standing; waiting, listening. Perhaps there had been two men—one making off with Mollie, the other coming back to finish me, lurking down there now. *Or was he coming up?*

There was a moment when I had the feeling that I was being stalked, there in the darkness. I drew back, tense, against the wall, knife upraised. I could not see my hand before me, but I strained my ears.

There *was* some one—something—mounting the heavily carpeted stairs! Footsteps, very slow, infinitely cautious. I held my breath, every muscle tense to leap. I was at the edge of the hall carpet. Concrete floor was behind me. I had closed the door to the flat. I realized now that the spring lock barred that refuge to me.

There was no escape. I was ten feet across a concrete floor from where the stairs went to the roof. Anywhere I moved I would be heard, and that ring would flash its deadly ray at me. Anywhere except directly forward toward the stairs up which my assailant was creeping.

I took a slow step forward. Stood again, peering, listening. He was coming up this last half-flight! Holding my own breath, I seemed to hear his breathing, the brushing of his feet against a stair. In an instant he would be near enough for me to fling myself at him.

I heard a click. A white beam of light flooded me, dazzled me, blinded me. I flung a hand against it and stumbled backward. I was caught, trapped—standing revealed, blinded in a white flash.

"GLORY be! Charlie! Why, it's Charlie!"

Mike's voice! The beam snapped off, then on again, away from me. By its reflected light I saw Mike, standing at the head of the stairs, regarding me.

"Charlie!" Relief and amazement had been in his hearty exclamation. But now he was tense. "Where's Mollie? I was comin' in downstairs. I heard a scream—— Charlie, it sounded like her voice."

"Mollie——" I stammered. I was still half blinded. And wholly confused. Mollie——"

"What is it? Sure, can't you talk?" He was over me, steadying me. He was frightened now. "I heard a scream. Then I heard a bottle break. I came up quiet-like. Charlie, for God's sake——"

I got my wits. Being knocked out by that ray, and the blinding flash of Mike's light, had scattered them. Swiftly I told him what had happened. We both knew that only a few minutes had passed. Evidently, while I was unconscious, Mollie had screamed as she was being dragged away.

No one had passed Mike in the hall. Then they must have gone up to the roof. We rushed up there. Mike had flung caution to the winds. Automatic in hand, he went up two steps at a time, with me after him, still clinging to the knife.

There was no sign of any one on the roof. The abnormal, gray fog-curtain overhead was gone, but clouds were coming up from the east. The stars were half obscured. It was dark on the roof, but in the dimness we could make out the parapet and the chimneys.

Mike swept his flashlight around. "Nobody here."

"They could have gone this way." I went to a section of the parapet. The building next door was half a floor lower—a drop of some eight feet to the adjacent roof. It was an empty, tin rectangle. In its center there was a box-like entrance over its descending stairs.

This other roof seemed empty, but we could not be sure.

"Come on," said Mike. Like a cat, for all his burly proportions, he dropped to the lower roof. I followed.

"What's that?" I whispered.

"Where?"

"Up there. Over us."

We crouched against the wall. There was a blob in the sky overhead—a tiny dark spot. It seemed to be moving. Coming down. At first it seemed like some huge balloon thousands of feet up. Then suddenly I realized that it was small and close above us. A few hundred feet, no more. It looked like one of the small, old-fashioned balloon baskets, with queerly shaped wings which now were folded. It was coming down rapidly, almost vertically.

It loomed against a star-area now, and I got a good view of it. A basket, with a man's figure leaning over it, looking down. A helicopter, of the sort, perhaps, which during the last few years had been proving practical. I could see the blur of its whirling, overhead propeller; and there was also a side propeller, which was turning more slowly, giving it a horizontal drift. Whatever motor the thing was using, it made no noise. It could not have been electric or any of the common, electrically fired, gasoline motors. Nothing of that sort could have been operated this night. An atomic engine, perhaps. They were just beginning to be used at this time.

I gripped Mike. "It's aiming to land on one of these roofs. This one —or the one we just left——"

THEN we both saw something else. It needed no explanation. From behind the stairway canopy of this lower roof on which we crouched, a narrow beam of red light shot up vertically into the air, waved an instant, then vanished. It probably had done that several times before—guiding the helicopter downward. Mollie and her abductor were behind that stairway canopy, waiting for the helicopter to land and take them up.

Mike jumped to his feet. "Come on, Charlie! We've got 'em!"

It was inviting death, rushing across the roof so openly; but Mike was never one to be cautious, and now he was thoroughly aroused. He shouted: "Come on, Charlie!" and ran forward.

Yet it was not as senseless a thing as it seemed. The roof was dim, vaguely illumined by the few remaining stars. It was forty feet from where we had been crouching to that box-like canopy behind which we knew our enemy was waiting. We could never have crept across that tin expanse undiscovered.

At Mike's shout, a figure appeared

over there in the shadows. It was what Mike expected. There was a tiny red flash. I shouted a warning to Mike, and dropped flat to the roof. Mike had leaped sidewise, and his automatic spat simultaneously with the flash. Both evidently missed. I could feel a tingle of the vibration in the air over me. Mike reeled, but kept his feet.

The figure had again disappeared behind the stair-head. Above us, the helicopter came slanting down. Its propellers whirred, but there was still no sound of a motor.

I was erect again. The helicopter landed twenty feet from us with a thump. It was dim over there, but from behind the canopy I saw a black-robed figure come out, carrying something. Mollie's inert form.

Mike was running across the roof, with me after him. His automatic again spat its yellow-red flame into the night. Three swift shots. He was firing high and wide, so as to avoid hitting Mollie.

THE whole thing happened in a moment. I was no more than ten feet behind Mike. The figure on the roof threw Mollie into the basket. The man in there seized her. The other man was climbing in, but Mike was upon him. They fell backward together upon the roof, entangled in the man's black cloak. I heard Mike's automatic clatter to the tin, saw another flash. It must have caught Mike down one side. He went limp, rasped out an oath. His assailant shook him off and was again making for the basket when I jumped on him. My knife sank into his abdomen. He fell.

"Charlie! The helicopter—Mollie's there——"

I turned at Mike's words, but the helicopter was rising. I jumped for it, but missed. It sailed up over my head, out of reach. The man in it was bending to its controls, ignoring us on the roof. It rose with a rapid acceleration. Higher. Faster. A blob now in the starlight. Straight up. A black pin-head, directly over me. Then it was gone.

I turned to find that the man I had stabbed was struggling with Mike on the roof. Locked together, Mike paralyzed temporarily down one side, and the man probably mortally wounded, they rolled over the tin.

Mike shouted: "Leggo of that, you devil!" With his one working hand he was trying to jerk something from the man's grip. A small metal cylinder, with a wire to it. They were near the parapet of the roof, which at this place was only a foot high.

"Mike!" I jumped for them. The metal cylinder, which we afterward learned was a battery containing the charge of the red ray, was in Mike's hand. But his antagonist, with a last despairing effort, wrenched it away and flung it. The thing hit the roof directly in front of me, and exploded with a deafening blast and a puff of purple light.

I staggered back. When I recovered and could see again in the darkness Mike was sitting up at the edge of the parapet—alone.

"He jumped, Charlie! Got away from me—and jumped over!"

Suicide, or perhaps he had known he was dying, anyway. Frenzied, perhaps not realizing where he was or what he was doing. He had thrown the battery to explode it and keep its secret.

"But, by thunder, I got his ring away from him!"

Mike held it up. A broad, square ring, with a small, red stone. And from the ring, connected to a tiny diaphragm back of the ruby-like gem, was a length of fine copper wire, which Mike had torn loose from the fellow's hand and arm when he ripped off the ring.

CHAPTER III

THE MESSENGER FROM MOLLIE

THE events of the remainder of that night and the next day linger in my memory like the phantasmagoria of a dream. We were frantic over Mollie, but there seemed nothing that we personally could do about it. We reported her abduction to the Yorkville Central Office, to which Mike was attached. Poor satisfaction! Who better than Mike himself knew how little able the police were to cope with this situation!

It was four A. M. when we got there. The office was completely disorganized. The chief listened; he made a formal entry of the affair—one of hundreds which jumbled his blotter into chaos. But he sat up with a jerk when Mike displayed the ring.

"Why didn't you say that in the first place, O'Flaherty? That's something really important. Nothing else on the body?"

We had gone down to the street from the roof, expecting to find the body. But it had not been there! No sign of it except a blood-stain on the pavement. Another of these lurking figures had come upon it no doubt, and had borne it off. Whatever secrets it held were lost to us.

Mike would not yield the ring. By dawn, which was now at hand, the city lights flashed on. The telephone was working again. But not the radio.

The city, with the blessed daylight upon it, looked over its wounds and strove to get back a semblance of normality. But the night would come again! Fourteen hours of safety. Then—what?

There was an exodus from the city. I understand that at least a million people fled their homes that day. Rivers of humanity over the bridges. Special boats and trains.

Possession of the ring, and our actual hand-to-hand encounter with one of the criminals, gave Mike and me an official importance in the affair. We telephoned Washington, and were ordered there with the ring. It was six o'clock in the morning when we started from Mineola in an army multiplane. On this flight we discovered something which simultaneously was being learned all over the North Atlantic area. Electrical conditions were normal, but only at, or quite near, the earth's surface. We started with our motors functioning perfectly. At a thousand feet they went dead, but they started again as we descended. There was no traffic that morning more than a thousand feet up.

IT brought a light to me. We had seen the giant image of a menacing hand in the sky, reflected *from above*. That abnormal cloud had been a smoke screen to hide whatever was up there! Mollie had been abducted—not taken away, but *up!* And now no air vehicle could go up. Why? Because this fiend was protecting himself. He was up there—or, at least, he had been last night. And he was protecting himself against attack.

We were over an hour in conference with the Secretary of War and other important members of his department at the Capitol. The details we had to give were the most tangible of any that the authorities had so far learned. The ring was given to the most eminent scientists in Washington.

We flew back to New York. On the way, in the cabin of the plane, we were able to get a little sleep, which we sorely needed. We landed refreshed physically, but with the thought of Mollie again goading us. But what could we do?

THE affair now had assumed an international importance.

The ring yielded little information. A stone of strange, crystalline formation. It looked like a ruby, but was not. In effect, with its diaphragm, it was a projector for some tiny ray. Some new, electronic vibration, the scientists said.

This fiend, this super-criminal who called himself the Master, was evidently operating high in the upper air. Fifteen thousand feet? A hundred thousand? We could not guess. His base last night had been over the North Atlantic. From it, or by shifting it a trifle, his ray ranged both New York and London. He had been close over New York at one time, I would swear to that. And Mollie had been taken up to him.

Up there now? Probably not. There seemed nothing abnormal in the air regions over the North Atlantic now. A thousand telescopes were trained up there. It was a clear day. From the Grand Banks to the Irish Coast and all down the Middle North Atlantic, fair weather was reported. Telescopes, searching the upper air, revealed nothing. This fiend had withdrawn to some hidden earthly base.

The authorities were reassuring. In a few days the fiend would be discovered. His base, his apparatus—all would be destroyed. A few days! I imagine millions of people laughed at that, with a laugh close to hysteria. What about the nights? Could we survive even this one which soon would be upon us?

It was night now in Japan, China, Australia, and all the Far East. A panic of fear lay upon every large city. There was a riot in Hong Kong. But the fiend made no move. It was quite evidently, as he said, the governments of the United States and Great Britain he was attacking.

New York was under martial law. So was London. And nearly every nation was hastily mobilizing an army. New York and London were being ransacked for the fiend's confederates. Perhaps they had all escaped? Gone, during the blackness of that terrible night, into the upper air? Hundreds of suspected people were being arrested on suspicion, but these moves did not seem to lead to anything.

The United States navy was ordered to mobilize off Sandy Hook. Vessels were arriving hourly. The Pacific fleet started post-haste for the canal, to get into the Atlantic. Britain was rushing vessels to all its Channel area. Other European powers offered help. A great gray squadron was over there. From South America, the A B C powers cabled that they were sending ships north to aid us if we needed them.

Every available fighting plane was ready. The ships carried them on the new aerial landing stages. The giant, spreading, anti-aircraft guns—the sensation of 1933 among new developments for war—were on the ships and on the planes. And every fortification of the North Atlantic Coast and the British Isles was equipped with them.

"We'll blow the devil out of him if he shows up over the city tonight!" a man exclaimed to me.

IT WAS early that afternoon. Mike and I were in the *New York Times* office. A howling bedlam in the street. A jam of people. Men with megaphones—their voices electrically magnified—were screaming the latest news at intervals to the crowd.

"Blow the devil out of him," the man repeated, plucking at my elbow. "Why, those guns can carry miles. And the shot spreads—sprays out like birdshot from a shotgun."

True enough! But how futile! The guns were now being tested. They fired satisfactorily. The shells screamed straight up into the air—but at the thousand-foot altitude they exploded! Above that level this strange vibration was till operating. It was stifling the radio—and it exploded, harmlessly, at a thousand feet, every shell that was sent into it.

The air above us was impervious to our attack! We could not fire into it, nor send our planes. A balloon might have been able to go, perhaps. Or a dirigible, with its motors dead. But in all the chaos of that day there was no one to try out the theory.

"It's only over the North Atlantic," said Mike. "The Pacific's all right, they're sayin'. South of about 30 degrees North Latitude even the Atlantic's all right. He's got an earth base—up in the Arctic, maybe—where he is now, in the daytime."

The shouts of the crowd outside, the roaring of the megaphones, the seething bedlam of this big newspaper room, nearly drowned Mike's words. And my attention was not on him. Mollie was up there. The whole world was after this criminal. The whole world sought to destroy him. But who, save Mike and I, was thinking of Mollie. These great navies—battleships, airplanes, giant guns—suppose they *did* locate the fiend's base and blow it to atoms? What of Mollie? She meant more to me than all this turmoil. I must do something. But what could I do? One man. Just one man in an affair like this. What could I do? What could I do?

I became aware of a plucking at my coat sleeve. A man was beside me—a small, thin fellow with a cap pulled low over his eyes. They were dark, glittering eyes. They held me.

"Listen." He spoke hurriedly, furtively. His accent was foreign. "I am a friend—a friend of a girl they call Mollie O'Flaherty."

I started, but he checked my exclamation.

"Speak softly. That man there"—Mike had moved a few feet away from me—"that man there—he is a friend of hers also?"

"Yes. Who are——"

"And you—her brother perhaps? I know she has a brother."

"Yes," I said upon impulse; "I'm her brother. That other fellow's name is Charlie Jones."

He was edging me away. I demanded: "Who are you?"

"I come from her. . . . Ah, that startles you? I am a friend—I have a message from her. Not here—I will say nothing here. Do you want to follow me?"

We were at the door. He seemed very alert, as though at a false move from me he would leap away.

"I'll follow you," I said.

CHAPTER IV

A HUNDRED MILLION IN GOLD

HE LED me to the crowded street. Unnoticed we slipped through the throng, down a cross street to a little basement restaurant. I had never been here before. By the sign, it seemed to be a Spanish place. The small front room was dark and gloomy, below the pavement level. A few tables, with linen not over clean, and sawdust on the floor.

There was no one in the room.

Beyond swinging doors I could hear voices. A man looked at us from a crack in the door, but no one came to take our order. I concluded that this mysterious guide of mine was known here, and that we would not be interrupted.

I was vaguely uneasy. I measured my distance from the door. It was near me; one jump, and I'd be out to the areaway. My companion, still with his cap over his eyes, slumped in the chair across the table. I guessed him to be Spanish. He eyed me for a moment in silence, then spoke softly:

"What is your name?"

I remembered I had said I was Mollie's brother.

"Mike."

"O'Flaherty?"

"Yes. You're full of questions, aren't you? What's it to you?"

He smiled gravely. His demeanor was far older than his years. He was regarding me shrewdly.

"I am going to trust you. My name is—José Pardo."

"You're Spanish," I said.

"Yes, but American born." He hesitated just an instant.

"You brought me here," I put in, "to tell me something about Mollie—my sister. What is it?" I spoke calmly, but my heart was beating fast.

"I will tell you—I trust you. Until—last night—I was in the service—employed by him who caused all that disaster."

"The Fiend!"

"We call him the Master." His voice was low and he spoke rapidly. He flung a darting glance around us. "The — the Master — had your sister Mollie brought up to him last night."

"*Up* to him?"

"I said *up*."

"Why?" I demanded. "What does he want of her?"

The fellow spread his lean fingers with a gesture. "Ah! That is for him to say. He once knew her. In Lethbridge, I think it was. You see, I tell you these things to convince you I am no impostor."

My mind leaped back. At fourteen, before I had known Mollie, she had lived with her widowed father at Lethbridge, Indiana. There was a university there—old man O'Flaherty had been the janitor, or something of the kind, in the science school. Mike had then been in New York. When their father died, Mollie had come to the city to live with her brother.

I held my voice steady. "This Fiend—this Master, whatever you call him — knew Mollie in Lethbridge?" My mind was roving. If I could get this fellow out into the street, hand him over to the authorities——

HIS voice snapped me back. "That is unimportant. I am a friend, I tell you. I no longer serve the Master. I want to help you—and her."

I leaned toward him. "How? Where is she? Can you take me to her?"

"No. But I may help her. Not to-day. To-morrow perhaps. You ask too many questions, O'Flaherty. I came—just to tell you this. To-night, over the radio, the Master is going to make his demands. But I think I can get the girl a chance to speak also. You will hear her."

There was a long pause. "Is that all?" I demanded at last.

"Yes—except one thing." His voice fell lower. "I cannot come out into the open with you—it would mean death to me. I'm risking that now—almost certain death. I'm wondering—when this is over, if I come to you—José Pardo—you'll take care of me? With money, I mean? There are millions at stake in this. Your government will learn that to-night. Millions! And if, when it's over and you've taken my advice—Mollie's advice as you'll hear it to-night—you'll get your government to give me a little fee——"

I interrupted: "For what?"

"Oh, you'll see in good time. My services will be obvious. You go now and tell your government about it—about me."

A slow, queer smile was on his thin lips. "A little matter of a hundred thousand dollars or so—for José Pardo. What would that be, for a rich government like the United States? Nothing but a tip—like giving a waiter a dollar."

He rose to his feet. "That's all. Think it over. You will hear from me again."

He stood waiting for me to leave. But I had no intention of doing that. This fellow knew where Mollie was. If the police could get him—force the truth from him——

"Come outside," I said. "I'll talk to you more about this."

He shook his head and pushed me to the door. "I told you to go."

A sudden anger rose in me. For all my meek name, Irish blood is within me, as it is in Mollie and Mike. And I am as tall as Mike, though not as burly. This little Spanish runt——

"Who're you to tell me what to do?" I rasped.

He did not raise his voice. "You had better go."

We were quite near the door. If I could shove him through it——

He eluded my lunge like a cat. Leaped backward and vanished behind a curtain. As I jumped at it, a heavy door banged in my face. Rapid footsteps came up behind me—two burly Spaniards rushed out from the kitchen beyond the swinging doors. Both had knives.

"Get out of here! You crazy? *Madre de Dios*—you come in here alone—talk to yourself like a lunatic—and rush around the room——"

"That man——"

"You're dreaming! You're alone—*solo*——"

They hustled me out. Threw me to the pavement. The front door of the little restaurant slammed after me.

I WENT back to the *Times* office. Found Mike.

"Can you make anything of it?" I demanded, when I had told him.

"Sure, not a thing." He was very solemn. "That lad's a traitor, maybe—we could use him."

"Maybe—and maybe not," I said. In truth, the fellow hadn't impressed me even for the dubious rôle of traitor that he claimed. He was some deeper game. But what? I could not guess.

We decided not to report the incident to the police. Of what use to have that restaurant building searched? Nothing would be found there, naturally. And I had not the slightest proof, except my unsupported word, that I had not been there alone.

It was now three o'clock in the afternoon. Eight o'clock in London. The night had fallen there. The second night. A radio was here in the *Times* office, but it was dead. We had a direct cable, however, from London. The normal newspaper activities were suspended. From one end of the room, at intervals, a man was shouting out the news which the cables brought.

For a time Mike and I sat listening. It seemed as though a repetition of last night in New York were now beginning in London. The cable messages sketched it in. Crowds—threatening panics—accidents. A hand in the sky was observed with a dark cloud-screen above it. The buildings were trembling, vibrating. But none had fallen. The hand was over the Thames, near the Parliament. So gigantic, it seemed menacing both sides of the river—the bridge, the Tower, Westminster, even to St. Paul's. A few moments—they thought that the Cathedral spires would fall. Then the disturbance ceased abruptly. The black screen began dissipating.

All the time the fighting planes were making an effort to rise. But they could not. The anti-aircraft guns flung their missiles up at the hand, at the smoke-screen hanging a few thousand feet up. But it was useless! The shells continued to explode harmlessly.

Off the coast the great warships steamed belligerently. Searchlights flared upward. But all so useless! And in the black, paralyzed city, soldiers patrolled—searched—eager to fight, but there was nothing to fight against.

AND then, at about four P. M. New York time—nine P. M. in London—the radio in both cities suddenly came to life. A strange snapping, a hiss. I could hear it now in the *Times* office. A silence fell over us all. Mike gripped me.

"His message—the Fiend's—it's coming now!"

"And Mollie's voice," I whispered. "Do you think——"

That fellow who had called himself José Pardo had told me we might hear Mollie's voice. I tensed myself—I hardly knew whether I wanted to hear her voice or not, under circumstances like these. Mike evidently felt the same way. His jaw was set, his eyes were narrowed to slits. On his chair-arms his huge fists were clenched with whitened knuckles.

The radio was murmuring. It cleared, strengthened. Over the room, dim in the summer twilight, the silence of the crowd was oppressive. From the radio came the same voice we had heard the night before. Grim, quiet, self-possessed, and very suave.

"The Master speaking. I have decided you do not need any further evidence of my power. I've been near London. I am gone now—well, where need not concern you."

A human chuckle! Yet how inhuman, fiendish, it sounded! He resumed more briskly:

"I demand of the Governments of Great Britain and the United States the sum of one hundred million dollars in gold. You have it in your National Reserves. Washington, alone, can spare it easily. That—and, say, one-half of the Crown Jewels. You have them in the Tower of London, haven't you? Pick out half of them, in money value. I would like the Kohinoor diamond, but I do not insist—you see, I am quite reasonable.

"Arrange it to suit yourselves, Washington and London! The cables will be working. I have adjusted my ray not to affect them, as you already know.

"You are to send to-night, from Washington, an ambassador to interview me. Where? That—all detailed instructions—I will give you later to-night. Select your man now. He is to come to me alone. When I see him I will tell him where and how to deliver the money and the jewels.

"My price is very moderate. If you decide not to pay it——" There was a long, horrible pause. Then a laugh, still more horrible. *"Why, half an hour ago I could have destroyed the Tower of London and all your Crown Jewels with it! And you in Washington—you hear me—by midnight to-night your gold re-*

serve would be non-existent if I so desired! You will not dare disobey me! Remember—have your envoy ready in Washington by eight o'clock to-night, Washington time. An hour before that you'll hear from me again, with instructions for him. Obey me and you are safe. Tell your citizens so. No need for any more panics. Your citizens will see how reasonable I am. Ask them. To a man, they will tell you to pay me. Your government money, your jewels—what are they compared to human lives?"

Another pause. *"Disobey me—you are doomed!"*

THE radio crackled. Died into silence. And then, for all these listening people, came an anti-climax. But it was not that, to me. I went cold. The room reeled about me.

It was Mollie's voice, coming from the radio. Small, faint, hurried, almost furtive. Mollie's voice, unmistakable.

"Charlie—Mike—oh, if only you can hear me! Don't—don't try to rescue me! You can't! I'm too far away! A friend wants to help me, but he won't be able. I can't escape. I'm—over the South Atlantic now, I think. About—about the latitude of Buenos Aires or Cape Town. A base—in the daytime we go south of Cape Horn—the Antarctic Plateau——"

She stopped with a horrible gurgle. The radio went blank, silent, wholly dead.

I leaped to my feet. Trembling. Shaken.

"Mike! You heard what she said——"

Mike was no longer beside me. He had vanished. But I did not wait to search for him. The thing was fairly clear to me now. That José Pardo had tried to trick me, thinking I would report what he said immediately to the authorities. And now Mollie's voice, telling of this helpful "friend"—she was being forced to trick us also. José Pardo had paved the way so that we would believe what she had just told us over the radio! It might have worked—the authorities might believe her words about the South Atlantic—and an Antarctic base! But to me, who knew her so well, her voice did not ring true. All a trick. I saw it clearly.

Decision had come to me. The Fiend had demanded an envoy from Washington to come to him. I would be that envoy!

CHAPTER V

ABOVE THE CLOUDS

I GO back now to recount what befell Mollie, as she afterward told it to me. She recalls being in the clutches of that black-robed figure; she saw me fall and she screamed. And as she was dragged away she screamed again. She lost consciousness—not wholly from fear; a drug, sweetish, overpowering, was pressed on a sponge against her nostrils and mouth.

When she came to her senses Mollie found herself lying at the bottom of a small, square cage—the interior of the helicopter. She was only half conscious. A man was with her, busy with his mechanism. Overhead and beside her propellers were whirling.

They were mounting rapidly. A black haze was around them—thin, like smoke almost gone. Mollie could feel it in her lungs. Acrid. Choking. Her head was reeling from the effects of the drug. She was sick and faint; but as she lay there she began to feel better.

They were high in the air, she knew. It was growing colder. The stars glittered white, clear, and steady. The rim of the basket hid everything but a quadrangle of sky. It was a silent ascent—only the rush of air past them, the whir of the propellers, a faint hum of the motors were audible.

Clouds appeared, gray, sullen—a summer storm. They went up through it. A dank, cold fog, thunder, and a single distant lightning flare. Then they emerged. The clouds dropped below them. Overhead the sky was glittering, cold, frosty.

The man threw a fur robe over Mollie, and went back to his motor, wrapping himself in a heavy cloak. Mollie had pretended to be asleep. She was oppressed; panting for breath in this thin, rarefied air. The blood tingled in her cheeks.

Another interval. Mollie had dozed.

"Ah!" said the man. "Look up there."

Mollie never understood much of the scientific details of what she now saw; but from her description, and from what I myself observed, I can piece it together.

THE thing was floating in the sky, hanging poised overhead, while the helicopter which bore Mollie mounted up to it. A huge, flat, oblong platform—five hundred feet long at least—was its basic structure. A system of pontoons was on its under side, and a quadruple row of small wheels. The platform seemed hanging from rigid, cylindrical gas-bags, which were above it in the manner of a multiple dirigible. There were propellers above, below, and to the sides. Underneath, pointing downward, was a cone-shaped projector. It had a tremendous diaphragm, with a glowing coil beside it, and light projectors, like giant search-lights mounted with small hanging platforms beside them. The pontoons and wheel landing gear were beneath.

As the helicopter mounted and slowly began to approach, Mollie got a side view. On the platform was an elaborate superstructure which suggested a small, modern yacht. It had a main cabin, with curtained windows, main deck running around it, with a railing; other, smaller deck houses. An upper deck, as narrow as a balcony, girdled the main building. A confusion of cables and wires led up to the cylindrical bags overhead. And of course there were the propellers and the rudders. Far up there was a small cabin, with a narrow, open passage like a steamship bridge, and spider ladders leading downward.

It was all a flat dead-white in the starlight. Dim spots of purple and red were at the lower deck corners, dully gleaming lights were in the rigging. The windows with brocaded curtains gleamed a warm yellow.

The helicopter landed gently on an open space of the lower deck. Snow lay like white powder in the crevices. Mollie saw other helicopters, folded, ranged in tiers in great brackets. And an airplane stage—there seemed several small planes.

Men seized Mollie and pushed her through a doorway, into a warm yellow glow of light. A soft, heavy rug was under her feet. She swayed, for she was still weak and dizzy. A voice said: "Stand up! You're in the presence of the Master."

IT CAME as a shock to Mollie; yet, curiously enough, it strengthened her, for it was something tangible with which she could cope. She stared across the small, luxurious cabin. At a desk, with strange-looking apparatus crowding it, a man sat regarding her. He gestured. The men who had brought Mollie in withdrew. She stood alone, facing this men at the desk—the man who now was terrorizing the world. And she found that she knew him—knew his name! Remembered him! And for an instant her fear of him dropped away.

"CARL RODGER!" It burst from her.

"Mollie! Sit down, Mollie. I have been waiting for you." He got to his feet—a small, slender figure of a man. Graceful, courtly manners. He had always had them! He barely touched her, but urged her gently to a heavy leather chair, and took his seat again at the desk.

"You're hungry, Mollie. And tired, of course. I'll have food prepared, and then you can go to your cabin for a rest."

He raised a small telephone receiver. "A breakfast for the lady. . . . No, served in her cabin. She will be there presently." He hung up. "I'll bother you only a moment, Mollie. Then, after you've slept, we'll talk again." His black eyes were roving her. "You have grown very beautiful. Ah, I knew you would, Mollie! I knew you would make a beautiful woman!"

"What—why did you bring me here?" she stammered. "These things—down there in the city to-night—you—then it's you——"

She could not talk coherently. Her brain was reeling. Carl Rodger! She had not seen him for four years. He had been a student, then a sub-professor of physics at the science college of which her father was janitor. She had never liked him, had always been rather afraid of him. But he had liked her. Once she had gone to the movies with him.

He had been a man then—thirty-five. He had seemed quite old to her youthful mind. A rich man—he had told her his father was rich, in Germany. A gentleman born, she had thought—aristocratic, perhaps even royal, with his courtly manners, his suave voice, his dignity and poise. A slender, dark, smooth-shaven man; thin-lipped; a hawk-like nose. . . .

She stared at him now. He had changed. All the same qualities were there, but something was added. An aspect of power. Indefinably it clung to him, like an aura; a sense, a consciousness, of his power. His will to dominate. And another change too. His dark, piercing eyes—she saw, or thought that she saw, a strange, weird light in them. She shuddered.

HE was smiling. "Mollie; I'm not a ghost! Stop staring at me! You're surprised, aren't you? You did not think to see Carl Rodger so exalted." He gestured. That lean hand like a claw! Its giant image had hung in the sky only a few hours before! "So exalted," he repeated. "They call me the Master. It is no empty title." His voice rose to a sudden, grim power. "I *am* Master! Of you—of all the world, little Mollie. A very great man——"

"You—you're a fiend!" She had not meant to say it, fearful of angering him.

He laughed. "Oh, no, I would not say that. I could have been much worse to-night. What I did was only necessary to show my power. Soon I shall be very rich—beyond all dreams of avarice of any woman——"

HE CAME quite suddenly and sat on the arm of her chair. She shrank away from him. He did not touch her.

"I would not frighten you, child. I'm wondering if you realize the honor I pay you. Carl Rodger! My father died most opportunely and left me a fortune. It enabled me to build this ship, Mollie, to manufacture my apparatus and organize my men. It took all my money, but I had a great secret. You understand? I discovered a new vibration, and a new means of projecting it. For years I have been working this out. I was planning all this back there in Lethbridge when I fell in love with you."

She stared at him wordlessly. He was smiling gently.

"A great honor, little Mollie. Carl Rodger, who soon will have millions, picking you, when he could have his choice of thousands of beautiful women. I don't know why I did it. Call it a whim. My loving you——"

Mollie strove for calmness. That glow in his eyes—they were somber dark pools, with a dancing light in them. Was he wholly sane? Or was he mad, crazed with this power that had come into his hands?

She faltered: "I do feel honored, but——"

"I'm going to tell them, these governments," he added slowly, "that you would like the Kohinoor.

"Ah, love, what nations I will bring to bow
Before your scepter, and to swear
Allegiance to your lips and eyes and hair.
The stars will be your pearls upon a string,
The world a ruby for your finger ring,
And you can have the sun and moon to wear,
When I am king!"

A madman! But abruptly he laughed—he had read her thoughts. "No, not mad, Mollie—wholly sane and purposeful as you will see. Except—mad with love for you—drunk with your beauty——"

He touched her, and as she shrank from him he sat back abruptly.

"I am a fool! I frighten you! That, most of all, I want not to do. Mollie—look at me——"

She forced her eyes to his. They were gentle now, almost wistful. He added softly: "I am Master of the world to-night—Master of everything and every one—except you! What I ask for will be given me. Only your love I cannot buy or steal. And you—without your love—I do not want that."

His voice was appealing. "Mollie—I want you to think well of me. Everything the world has to offer will be yours. I want to lavish it all on you, and I want—your love."

ABRUPTLY she felt less afraid of him. "I can't give it, Carl."

"Why?" he rasped. "There were two men down there with you. Your brother and—who else?"

He startled her.

"Charlie Jones," she said impulsively.

"You—love him?"

The answer must have been in her eyes. Rodger was on his feet; his manner changed again.

"You're tired, Mollie. Go to your cabin and sleep."

He helped her from her chair. She decided to try just one thing.

"Carl, if you love me—if you want me to think well of you——"

"What?" he demanded.

"I want you to stop these murders. Send me back to my brother. Stop all this——"

His laugh was harsh as a file on steel. "It is you who are mad, not I."

"You won't—let me go?"

"To your cabin? Certainly!"

He pressed a button on his desk. "Show the lady to her room."

As she was led away she heard him give swift orders into the telephone: "Head us north. Watch the clouds—keep over them. Have Jacques drop down into New York now before we leave here. Have him see José Pardo. José has my plans—my orders. And I want Jacques to get a man named Charlie Jones. José will know—not the girl's brother, but a fellow who is generally with him. I want that Charlie Jones brought up here to me. Have Jacques bring him up when we come back to-morrow night!"

THE events that followed were confusing to Mollie. She no more than half understood them. She was led to a luxurious little cabin. Food was there. She ate some. It may have been drugged—she does not know. But almost at once she was asleep.

The ship—floating platform, whatever it could be called—evidently went north. Its land base has never yet been found. Somewhere, doubtless on the fringe of the Arctic. The ship traveled at a high speed. At what speed, we do not know.

It was daylight—a weak, far-northern daylight — when Mollie awakened. They were in the air. Perhaps they had landed and started again. Hours had passed while she slept. Ten hours or more.

Food again was brought to her. Carl Rodger did not appear. The ship—what she could see of it—seemed to bear possibly five hundred men. We estimated afterward that Rodger's force was about that. There had not been, probably, as many of his confederates in New York that terrible night as had been thought. A hundred possibly. And half as many in London. Each had been equipped with his ray in a small size. Some of the havoc was played by these lurking men; then, in helicopters, with Rodger's own motor, driven by his ray, they had escaped upward. Most of the havoc in New York had come from the air. Rodger had been above London, and then above New York. His apparatus, with an effective range of possibly three or four thousand miles, could dominate both cities at once. The hand was an image of his own hand, projected downward by reflected light—a light almost invisible. His ray was itself a form of that light.

All of this I have pieced together now from the known facts.

Mollie sat in her cabin. No one came near her for hours. Once she heard the voices of men in a cabin adjoining. Through the thin wall—this whole structure seemed as light as paper—she heard Rodger's voice:

"José will plant it. If they think the lady Mollie has a friend here—some one who is a traitor——"

Another voice: "Pardo is clever, Master."

"Yes. I told him to mention a hundred thousand dollars as his price. Make them think that for that money he would betray me. Then I'll have Mollie talk over the air—as though she had been given the opportunity unknown to me. She'll tell the world we're down over the South Atlantic." He chuckled. "A base near the South Pole—we might as well have them looking down that way."

This occurred just as Mollie woke up. The other voice asked:

"You say the lady will speak over the air?"

"Yes. She's asleep now. I am going in to her presently."

RODGER forced Mollie to make her statement, which we had heard in the *Times* office. His manner was wholly different now. Cold. Menacing. But once, abruptly, he whispered to her: "I love you, little lady Mollie. You see how deferential all my men are to you? I am brusque only because I am busy. This, my girl, is my big night."

They were over London. She saw them lay the smoke-screen. Rodger, proud of the many scientific devices with which he had surrounded himself, made sure that she saw every detail.

From above the smoke-screen, forty thousand feet up or more, the light ray shot downward with its giant, menacing image. And through it, seeming to come from it, was the devastating vibration. It had never yet been used to a tenth of its full intensity.

"You see, Mollie, I merely hold my hand here——"

They were in a small instrument room, down a ladder, beneath the main platform. Wires were singing, humming; the place seemed full of strange, electrical noises. And glaring with strange, lurid lights.

"Hold my hand here——" A tiny green-red beam from some nearby orifice fell on his hand; the beam went to a mirror, came slanting back; passed through a tiny series of lenses and through a prism—into a large lense. Spreading, it went downward through the plate-glass window at their feet.

Mollie did not know it, but soon they were speeding southwest, toward Washington. They were far on their way when Rodger spoke to London through his microphone. His aerial—stretched beneath the platform—sent his words, in their universal wave-length, down to the listening world.

"Now, Mollie! No faltering."

She spoke as he had directed—those words I had heard in the *Times* office. They satisfied Rodger; momentarily they deceived the world. But I, who loved her, knew them for what they were.

Other hours passed. Rodger was too busy to have time for Mollie. She seemed free to move as she pleased. But always there were eyes watching her, always there were foreign-looking men lurking nearby. Young men, all of them. Intelligent, grave, silent, intent upon their duties. Deferential to her, it seemed, but alert to her every movement. And utterly sinister.

It was, she understood, now nearly nine P. M., Washington time. Rodger had ordered an envoy to come up to him. He said he was over Atlanta, Georgia—his ray reached down there and plunged the city into darkness—but Mollie knew they were not far from Washington. Rodger had given directions as to what the envoy was to do. He chuckled. It was a sullen, black night all along the United States Atlantic seaboard. Exactly what he wanted. His ship was above the low-lying clouds. He gave his orders concerning the envoy. Then he momentarily turned off his apparatus which had plunged the capital into darkness. The Washington National broadcasting station sent out an answer. Mollie heard it up there with Rodger. The envoy was coming, it said; the Master's orders would be obeyed.

"Of course," laughed Rodger. "You see, Mollie, they have intelligence, as we hoped."

THE great sending diaphragm under the ship had been silent. Now it hummed again. The city of Washington, with all its adjacent territory up as far as New York, was paralyzed and in darkness.

Rodger's eyes were gleaming as he turned to Mollie. "I sent down yesterday for your lover—ah, you start! This Charlie Jones! They'll bring him up presently. Jacques should be here with him now."

Mollie stammered: "Why—why do you want him?"

He stood before her. The world was calling him a fiend; his face, the look of him now, fully justified it.

"I want him," he said slowly, "so that you may see him die. It won't be a pretty sight. I doubt if you will love him when you see him die —like that!"

There was a commotion outside the cabin—a helicopter landing. Rodger, like a leopard, swung to the door.

"That you, Jacques?"

"Yes, Master."

"Did you bring him? That Charlie Jones? Did Pardo point him out? You have him here?" An eagerness, inhuman, was in his tone.

"Here he is, of course, Master."

A struggling man was thrown across the deck and into the cabin.

It was Mike.

CHAPTER VI

A WOMAN'S SACRIFICE

MEANWHILE, I had gone in haste to Washington. Mollie's connection with the affair brought me now into greater prominence. It was not difficult to persuade the officials in charge to allow me to be the envoy, especially since I had a plan—an idea of what I might do—which seemed, at least, to have a chance of success.

I was closeted at a special war conference called in the emergency. A detailed course of action was mapped out. I need not detail it now. Subsequent events as they transpired are self-explanatory. The Secretary considered my attempt as little short of suicidal. Perhaps it was, but it was the only way I could see that might benefit Mollie—and that was my guiding motive, though I did not say so.

While we were in conference, Rodger's voice again came to us, with details of what the envoy was to do. And at once, with solemn handshakes, I started out—alone, on foot, into the black, silent Capital streets.

I had no flash, no weapons—nothing but my credentials from the United States Government to "The Master." I did not know what I was to do, save that I was ordered by Rodger to proceed north along a certain street, to make several specified turns, and to keep close to the houses. I had made no more than the first turn or so when, in the darkness, hands seized me. I was jerked into a doorway.

"Quiet! You're all right! I'm leading you!"

A black robe was flung over my head. Hands guided me up a flight of stairs to a roof. The cloth was taken off. In the semi-darkness of the roof-top a masked man searched me and handed me a small flashlight and an envelope.

"Climb in here. I'll start the motor. You'll have nothing to do."

A helicopter was on the roof. I climbed in. The masked man started the silent motor.

"Here—I'll show you how to throw in the gears."

The thing was simple enough. He climbed out.

"Good-by. When your barograph shows ten thousand feet, read your directions."

I flung in the gear to engage the lifting propellers. At ten thousand feet—I was over the low-lying cloud area then—I read my typewritten directions:

> At twenty thousand, increase your lifting power one intensity. Another at thirty thousand. At thirty-five thousand, decrease until you hold level. Display your red flash. Then wait until you are picked up.

I followed the directions to the letter. All necessary details were appended. Bundled in Arctic robes which were in the car, and panting for breath, I waited. Then lights appeared above me. A larger vehicle descended. I was taken aboard it. My helicopter was clamped to the outflung gear of the new arrival.

A horizontal flight, then up—I could not tell how far or how long. . . .

THAT time when Mike had been beside me in the newspaper office, listening to the radio, brought him one of the strangest experiences of this whole affair. He cannot explain it—the thing never will be explained for a certainty. It is probable, however, that the man Jacques, whom Rodger had sent to get Charlie Jones, edged his way through the crowd until he was beside Mike, then he used his ring-vibration—a low intensity, but prolonged—which affected Mike curiously.

All Mike remembers is that he suddenly felt faint, stifled, choking for air. His senses reeled; the room seemed far away—dreamlike. But he could see the front door. A low voice said: "You need air. I'll help you outside."

He remembers that some one guided him. He thought dimly that it was I. Like a drunken man he found the street, was guided along it. Babbling. Then he recalls that he wanted to go to sleep. He found a house entrance—or was pushed gently into it. He lost consciousness.

When he came to himself he was in the air. They held him forcibly. Landed him. Threw him, struggling, wrathful as only Mike can be, into the cabin with Mollie and Rodger.

He gathered himself. Blinked. "Mollie!"

"You!" She would have flung herself into his arms, but Rodger stepped between them. He was white-lipped. His attendants leaped at Mike. Three of them held him.

"Who in the devil are you?" Mike panted. "Mollie——"

Rodger said with a slow calm: "We're glad to have you here. You're a big fellow, aren't you? Well, your kind is no harder to kill. Easier sometimes."

He gestured to his men. "Tie him up over there, and bring me a length of wire, with a battery."

Mike, struggling with the men who gripped him, caught a glimpse of Mollie's white, agonized face. She flung him a glance; it told him that there was a great deal about this which he did not understand, but which she did. Mike decided to keep his mouth shut. He abruptly ceased hesisting; he set his jaw, eyeing the room grimly.

They tied him, spread-eagle fashion, against the wall—his back to it, his arms over his head; lashed up so that only his toes touched the floor to bear half his weight.

Mollie found her voice: "What—what are you going to do?"

Rodger swung on her. "Do! I'm going to let you see your lover suffer—and at last—die!"

A man said: "Shall I gag him, Master?"

"Gag him? No! We want to hear what he says, under the red wire! I want this girl to hear him as he dies! A big fellow—she thinks he is a hero, no doubt! I want to undeceive her——"

Mollie's laugh was hysterical. "This isn't Charlie Jones, Carl. This is my brother—Mike O'Flaherty."

"Oh! It is?"

"Yes—Mike—tell him, Mike! He thinks you're Charlie."

Mike growled: "Sure, he's a fool!"

That infuriated Rodger. To him it was added proof that she loved this Charlie Jones. Lying. Fighting for her lover. He had heard of a brother Mike, but had never seen him.

Rodger's face was a mask. A man said:

"Master?"

"Yes, Frantz."

"I brought this lady up here, Master. This was one of the two men who tried to rescue her on the rooftop. They killed Rotan."

"Yes, I know. You saw both the men, Frantz?"

"Yes, Master. I would recognize them both. This is one of them——"

"Her brother or her lover?"

"I don't know."

Rodger swung around. "Where is Jacques?"

"Here, Master."

"Did José Pardo point this fellow out to you?"

"Yes, Master."

"This is Charlie Jones?"

"Yes, Master."

"Not her brother?"

"No. Pardo had a talk with her brother, as you directed. This fellow was constantly with him. Her brother is as tall as this one, but not as heavy."

"I remember him," Frantz put in. "He was on the roof. There is no mistake, Master. This is the man you want."

Mike's eyes were roving the room. He opened his mouth to speak, but closed it again. Mollie stood with her back against the table. The room swam before her gaze. Dimly she was aware of the entrance of a man into the cabin. He held a length of heavy wire, with a handle in which was a battery. Rodger held it by the handle, lashed it tentatively like a whip.

"Ah! This will do nicely!" His fingers touched a button on the handle. The wire hummed, grew red, then yellow, then white, incandescent with heat. Rodger held it up before Mike's face. "A big fellow like you—not afraid of this, are you? Speak! We want to hear your voice! How nice and brave it is!"

"No!" rasped Mike. "You're makin' a mistake. I'm her brother——"

Rodger dangled the wire. The heat of it scorched Mike's face. He twisted his head aside. Rodger murmured: "We'll start with the shoulders——"

Mollie leaped, but a man flung her back. "Carl! He—he's Charlie Jones! Have it your way——"

He whirled on her. "Ah! Now we're getting the truth!"

Mollie was making a last desperate effort. She silenced Mike's exclamation. "Yes. My lover, Charlie Jones! But I don't love him. I never did! He thinks I do, but he's a fool!" Her laugh was mingled with a wild sob. She staggered at Mike. "See! I'm coming out in the open now!" Her hand struck Mike's face with a gesture of contempt. "I hate him! I was playing him for a fool!"

She flung herself on Rodger. His hand swung the dangling wire away from them. Her arms went up about his neck. She was shuddering inside, but her voice was low, seductive.

"Carl, it's—it's you I love! Can't you see it? A man of power, of wealth, like you! Oh, I didn't want to admit it so quickly—a man never values what he gets too easily! But it's true! Let him alone, Carl. Don't—we don't want to bother with him! Send him back."

She drew Rodger's face down to hers and held it caressingly. "Carl, you'll do as I ask? I love you——"

The sound of a vehicle arriving on the deck outside interrupted her. A voice called: "Master, the envoy from Washington is here!"

Rodger turned. "Good! Head us for London! Hurry! Full speed!"

The door swung open. I was ushered into the cabin.

There was just an instant when Mollie and Mike nearly betrayed me. And the shock of surprise at the scene into which I was plunged came close to making me betray myself. We all three stared at one another blankly. But I had my wits about me and flashed a warning look.

Roger did not notice. His half-crazed, distorted brain perhaps brought him a sense of embarrassment that the envoy from Washington, whom he had planned to receive with a grave, ceremonious dignity, should find him in these circumstances. He snapped off the current in his wire.

"Your pardon, sir," he addressed me.

Hastily Mike was released.

"Put them in separate cabins—guard them well."

Mike and Mollie, hardly daring to glance at me, were hurried away.

"Your pardon, sir. Sit down. We have a great deal to discuss."

He helped me off with my heavy robes. We sat facing each other across his desk. How keen his eyes were!

"Now, sir," he began briskly, "I will explain how this money and the jewels are to be delivered to me. Your governments may have wondered why I did not give the details directly to them over the air—why I bother with an envoy——"

He chuckled confidentially. "There are many dishonest people in this world. This is a large sum. I would not like to make my plans public and have our money waylaid—stolen on its way to me. That would be too bad, eh?"

"Quite so," I said. "We shall follow your orders."

He nodded. "We shall handle it like this. Listen closely."

For an hour, or even more, we discussed the details of how the money was safely to be paid him. An elaborate scheme. It never transpired, so it is unimportant. I had no intention of allowing it to transpire. My mind was only partly on what he was saying. Beneath my careful, perfunctory answers, my thoughts were roving.

Mike's inexplicable presence here, and, most of all, the fact that we were now headed back to London, had upset all my plans. Our forces near Washington were ready to act when the moment came. But now we were headed for the vicinity of London! We were flying at tremendous speed, I knew. Not like a lighter-than-air, comparatively slow dirigible. The gas bags overhead were folded now, and huge wings in banks, like those of a quadruplane, had opened. The decks, the spider ladders, were all enclosed now with sliding panels of what seemed glass. We must have been at some tremendous height, at which the rarefied air made possible an enormous speed. It had been very cold on the unheated decks, but now I could see the snow melting out there behind the panels, so great was the heat that came from the air friction of our forward rush.

A few hours—then we halted over the Irish coast. It was then, London time, about three A. M. . . .

I HAD played my part with Rodger. I felt safe enough. No one on board, except Mollie and Mike, knew me.

Rodger—I suppose merely because he felt that he was more secure in doing always the unexpected—was going to send me down into London, instead of Washington. He had called a truce while I was on board, and had withdrawn his ray for the time being.

"They're all unhampered down there now," he said. "But if they make a hostile move—well, for their sakes I hope they won't."

He had several times left me alone during the flight. But though I saw no one, I felt that unseen eyes were upon me. I acted normally. Once, when for half an hour I was left to my own devices, I strolled about the cabin, peered out its windows. Then, casually, I went to the deck. Roamed around. Looked with interest up into the network of ladders and bridges overhead. Or examined the ladders leading down underneath the main platform level. And the folded helicopters—how did one get the things open and in action? There was a small airplane; I knew I could operate it. And I saw individual parachutes and one-man gliders, in racks like life-preservers on a sea-level ship. Men were at guard before what seemed two small staterooms. Were Mollie and Mike there?

I saw many things. . . .

"OH, here you are!" came Rodger's voice. "Now, as I was saying—about the gold—there will be a large number of cases—it is heavy—the jewels will be far simpler——"

I followed him back into the main cabin. It was now about an hour before dawn. We were over the Atlantic, approaching the Irish coast. The night in this region had been cloudy, but it was clear now. Rodger had slowed up and descended. We were now at an altitude of no more than ten thousand feet. The sea was visible. And the lights of ships far down there, off the coast. Warships. . . .

Rodger rang a bell. A man appeared.

"Frantz, give those British ships down there the signal. I arranged it with Washington, who will have notified them. The signal that their envoy is about to return to them."

But the man Frantz only stared stupidly at me! And on his face was a dawning recognition.

"Why," he stammered — "why, Master, this is a spy! If that big fellow is the girl's brother—then this is Charlie Jones!"

I was on my feet. And at that instant, from the sea below us, a shell came screaming up! The British fleet—in all the confusion of that night, uninformed of the Washington arrangements—had seen us and was opening fire!

CHAPTER VII

THE LAST OF THE FIEND

THE startling fact that we were being fired at by the warships below far overshadowed Frantz's exposure of me. Momentarily, Rodger forgot me. Frantz was stricken with fear. Rodger ripped out an oath, leaped for his desk, issued swift commands. A man looked in from the deck, shouted, and went out again.

It was a moment of confusion. I took advantage of it. I was out of the cabin door before either of them realized I had gone. The deck was dim with its glow of purple light. Fifty feet along it were the doors behind which I was sure Mollie and Mike were confined. The guards were still loitering there; I was unarmed —I could not go that way. Overhead was a dim vista of ladders, ropes, wires—up past the folded gas bags to the spreading wings of the vehicle. Near me was a ladder leading down a companionway under the deck. I wanted to go down it—down to the instrument room, where I knew they had the ray-projector.

Another shell came screaming up. All around me men were appearing

—running, shouting. The deck lights were extinguished. They were drawing the cabin curtains, dimming the lights inside.

I had been crouching in a shadowed corner of the deck. Running figures came and disappeared down the companionway to the instrument room. I decided not to try to go after them. Then I heard Rodger:

"Go get him, Frantz! Where is he? He was here a moment ago! He's Charlie Jones, you say?"

I could not stay where I was. Any moment I would have been discovered, caught. There seemed no one over me at the moment. It was dark up there—a wilderness of ladders, cross-bridges, ropes, and cables. I jumped for the nearest ladder, and went up it swiftly.

I found a corner of a small cross passage which hung swaying between two struts of the giant wings. Fifty feet, perhaps, above the deck of the main structure. The wind sang around me—whistled through the dark rigging. Beneath me was the great oblong outline of the ship. The sounds of its activity floated up.

I crouched there. Waiting. Undecided what to do. An hour? Half an hour? I have no idea. Time is measured for us humans by the events it holds. The events of a lifetime seemed whirling in a cataclysm beneath me as I crouched there.

The warships were firing now in a continuous bombardment. The shells screamed up, but we had not been hit. The new anti-aircraft shells were bursting around us—spattering us, though as yet harmlessly, with their hail of spreading shot. There were war planes down there, rising from the stages of the battleships. We had dropped down a trifle — we were not more than seven thousand feet above the calm starlit sea. The war planes were coming up like wasps to assail us.

And then—it must have been only a few moments after the first shot was fired at us—Rodger's ray flashed on. I could hear its faint hum, could feel the flimsy aerial passage vibrating under me. The warships went wholly dark; the motors of the war planes went dead. The planes sank, and glided in helpless spirals to the surface.

Impotent! That great fleet down there—mistress of the seas—was helpless to attack us. Down at the thousand-foot level the shells were now exploding with great yellow-red bursts of fire. And the ships sent up light-flares—the new white flare designed to expose hostile, hovering planes. The flares all ignited at a thousand feet. A riot of vivid light. And, safe above it, we hung poised.

The ray increased in intensity. It could have destroyed the fleet down there, perhaps. But it did not. A whim of Rodger's—crazed with his power, he sought a more dreadful vengeance. He was safe against attack by these ships—he would attend to them later. His ray swung east, nearly horizontally. I saw its faint red beam swaying off toward London. And I saw the light-beam which carried the giant image of his hand . . . .

THEY told me afterward how it looked in London; and from a plane I saw the ruins. But the actuality—I pictured it as I crouched up there in the darkness. The green-edged, claw-like hand, seemingly embracing all the city. The huge ring, darting its red fire. The buildings trembling. Just a little at first. Then more violently. Trembling. Shaking. Rocking to their very foundations. Falling! The Parliament spires; the towers of London Bridge; the Tower of London across the Thames. Westminster—shattered, falling from its calm, glorious dignity in one horrible moment into a jumbled pile of ruins. St. Paul's—the dome cracking, falling like an egg-shell crushed into fragments. Flames rising everywhere to stain the black night with blood. The roar of falling masonry drowning all the myriad agonized screams of the human victims.

I FOUND myself suddenly on my feet. Aware of nothing save the horrible pictures I was conjuring, I found myself sliding down the ladder to the main deck. The instrument-room companionway seemed empty. I ran for it. But there was a man standing there. Hands gripped my shoulders. But a frenzied madness was upon me, and a strength perhaps momentarily superhuman. I flung off the hands, seized the man bodily about the waist, hurled him. His body struck a glass panel at the rail, went through it with a crash. A great, black, jagged hole was left. . . .

I fell or slid down the steep companionway. Crossed in a bound to a small hanging platform. A man was there, with his hands on the controls of a huge projector. My fist caught him in the face. He sagged, inert, over his mechanism. I ran over a hanging bridge, burst through a doorway into the instrument room, into a lurid glare of red and green darting lights—swaying, vivid-colored beams. The place was filled with the whining hum of the current.

Three men were here. I burst upon them like a bomb. Two of them, after the first instant of surprise, leaped to their feet and flung themselves at me. The third held his place before the instruments.

It was a blurred chaos, that brief fight in the instrument-room. I jumped for the sitting man—his fingers gripped the controls of the deadly ray. But I did not reach him; the others were on me. We swayed, locked together, went down, with both of them pounding me. But I staggered up and shook them off, first one, then the other. They were smaller men than I, but they were young and strong, and they fought with a grim desperation.

A table with a glass bell of incandescent purple gas in it crashed to the floor. Pungent fumes choked us. A fist caught me in the jaw. I staggered, shook my head, roared, and came back to the attack. The man at the table was now up, joining the others. Blurred, lurid lights; choking fumes; men leaping, clawing at me, as I raged among them, fighting like a wildcat.

Then one went down, struck his head, and did not rise. I staggered over his fallen body; flung another adversary away from me. Fighting almost blindly; frenzied, gasping for breath in the fume-laden room. It was wrecked now. The colored beams of light were all nearly gone. A heavy glass prism came hurtling at my head. Missed me; crashed into other instruments. I was bleeding, cut by the flying glass of broken mirrors.

One of my antagonists suddenly fled. The remaining one leaped back, and stood panting against the table. At my hand was a heavy grid of red-hot wires. I seized it; with the flesh of my hand burning, I flung it. The thing caught him full in the face. He went down.

I was standing alone. Victorious. For another brief instant I flung myself about the little room. Ripping, tearing; jerking loose batteries, coils, tubes—flinging them aside.

The colored lights of the room were all extinguished. The electrical hum had ceased. A single broken wire spluttered on the floor. The heavy gas fumes had all but overcome me. I reeled to the door.

The cool, fresh air of the night revived me. My face and hands were cut and burned; I was bruised all over, but still able to fight. And as I stood there for an instant, drawing the grateful, life-giving air into my burning lungs, the frenzy of madness dropped away. An exaltation, a triumph, took its place. Rodger's deadly ray was destroyed!

Above me—up the companionway—the ship was in confusion. Running footsteps; shouts. A man came clattering down the ladder. I was calmer now. I ducked into a shadowed corner and let him go past. He dashed into the instrument room, then out again; shouting, he went off across a small swinging platform and back up to the deck.

I suppose it had all happened in no more than a few moments. The sea beneath me was plainly visible. The battleships were in action again! A war plane rose.

Rodger's power was gone. His single, diabolical weapon had been invincible. But I had smashed it—wrecked it irrevocably.

A SHELL from one of the warships came whistling up. There was no thousand-foot level to stop it now. It came up—and tore through our rigging. I could feel the shock, feel the vehicle waver, sway. Another shot! Wide of us. But a third caught a corner of the platform. Tore it off, with the brittle crash of splintered metal. Swung us like a great ship rising on a mountainous wave. Flames broke out. A chaos above me. Terrified shouts.

Below, on the sea, I caught a glimpse of the great British fleet, steaming to a position under us. Black smoke rose from the gray funnels. Shots whistled up. A squadron of wasp-like war planes came up on a long, spiral ascent.

It was my opportunity, this chaos on board. I mounted the companion-ladder. The steeply-tipped deck was a litter of wreckage. Lurid with the reflected glow of the flames. Swept by the black smoke. Men were frantically trying to launch the helicopters. Others, with parachutes and gliders, were leaping from the rails—leaping into the starlit void of space.

Rats leaving a sinking ship. We were indeed sinking. The rigging was half town away. The motors were disabled. The main structure hung askew.

ANOTHER shot crashed through us. I scrambled with a frenzied desperation up this section of the deck. I was holding a jagged piece of steel I had picked up. Its end was sharp as a sword-blade. There was no one now guarding those two small cabin doors. And as I reached them, Mollie's voice was screaming:

"Help! Help! Come in here! Some one! Help!"

I found her, bound with a length of rope. Cut her loose.

"Where's Mike?"

"I don't know! Oh, I don't know!"

We found him, bound and gagged, lying in a bunk in the adjoining cabin. In a moment we were all three outside. The smoke, the glare, the confusion, were horrible. The deck in one place was strewn with bodies—mangled.

"There was a small plane," I gasped. "I remember seeing it——"

In one place I saw them trying to launch a plane. It lurched into the air; wabbled. A British war plane roared past, stabbed it with a shot. It fell.

We found the plane I had remembered. Some one had tried to launch it, and failed. It lay slumped sidewise on its runway. In the red smoke surging around us I saw a figure at the plane, but it ducked and vanished.

"We can't get it off!" Mike shouted to me. "It's wedged——"

A shell whistled overhead, burst in the shattered rigging. The deck shook under our feet. It jarred the plane loose; and as the deck tipped further, we saw the runway sloping downward with the plane hanging almost in position at its top. In an instant we were aboard. It was not equipped with a Rodger's motor. A small cabin plane with one of the 1936 compensating motors. My company had given me one to use on a selling tour the year it came out.

I started the motor without difficulty. We slid down the runway, lurched into the air with a roar. Fell free; and in a moment I had leveled it out.

We were some three or four thousand feet up. The ships were nearly beneath us. War planes like darting insects went up past us. Overhead, to one side, Rodger's vehicle hung wavering. Flames enveloped it now from end to end. Figures fell from it—hurtling down like black plummets. Shots whistled around us.

Mike shouted: "Head us off—down that way."

The mountains of the Irish coast stood off there, wan in the starlight. But behind them the sky was flushed with pink. Dawn was at hand.

The red-yellow flames of Rodger's vehicle made a lurid torch up there in the pale starlight. The burning ship was falling. Faster now. It passed our level. And then, suddenly, it turned over; red, like a giant fire-balloon. Turned over and seemed to hang for one breathless instant. Then it slid like a long, shuddering flame—slid down and plunged into the sea.

"CHARLIE!" Mollie's voice brought me back to myself.

We three were not alone on our little plane! Through the cabin window, across the top wing area, a man was crawling. A gray blob in the starlight, edged with the pink light of dawn. Then a white flare from below burst near us. It illumined his face. Rodger! I remembered the figure I had seen prowling about the plane when it was jammed on the broken, burning deck. Rodger had been trying to launch it. He had boarded it with us!

Mike growled: "What's he doin'?" He opened the cabin slide and roared: "Come in here, you!"

It was obvious in a moment what Rodger was doing. The look on his face in that glare of the light-bomb should have told me. Half-crazed, always, with the cunning of a madman, he had been lying out there, watching his ship go to its destruction. His cause was lost; capture and death awaited him when he landed; and, to his twisted brain, had doubtless come one last lust for vengeance.

He was crawling over the wing. A grin of fiendish glee was on his face. His groping hands found one of the control wires, seized it, ripped it loose. We wavered in the air; but though I knew now we could not rise, I could still hold us on the long straight slant downward. The sea was like a mirror; the plane had landing pontoons——

But Rodger was coming back, determined upon suicide; chuckling that he would take Mollie—all of us—with him. He came to a tiny ladder which, on this type of triplane, leads down to the lower wingface, and connects with a small bridge back along the fuselage to the rudders.

Mike flung a wrench across the wing. It went wide of its mark. Over the motor we heard Rodger's wild, blood-chilling laugh.

He was on the ladder, starting down. We were still over a thousand feet in the air. He was trying to reach the tail controls. He could tear them loose, or head us into a nose-dive which in a few seconds would plunge us to death.

I hurriedly gave the stick to Mike. Rodger in his madness did not see me coming. I got across the upper wing-face and down the ladder. Beneath me was the abyss of space. A battleship was down there—I seemed to be gazing down into its tiny funnels.

I leaped backward, fell into the narrow bridge where Rodger was clinging. His maniacal laugh was more horrible than an oath. His fingers gouged my face. Then he broke away from me. At the rudder I caught him again. Our weight had brought down the tail. We were in a tail-spin! Mike had lost control.

A dizzy instant with the heavens whirling around me. I tore Rodger loose. Shoved him from the rudder strut to which he was clinging. I had a last glimpse of his contorted face as he fell.

How I ever got back to the upper wing and into the cabin, I don't know. But by the time I got there Mike had jerked the nose of the plane down. We leveled at barely a hundred feet above the water.

And then I landed us safely. With the motor shut off, we sat huddled in the silence, almost wordless. There are some experiences—the nearness of death, roaring, surging, and then abrupt calm, and safety assured—which are beyond words.

From a nearby destroyer a boat was putting off to come and get us. They thought us enemies then. We barely saw the boat, with the sun of the new day just rising over the flushed Irish hills behind it. Our eyes were vivid with other things we had seen that night.

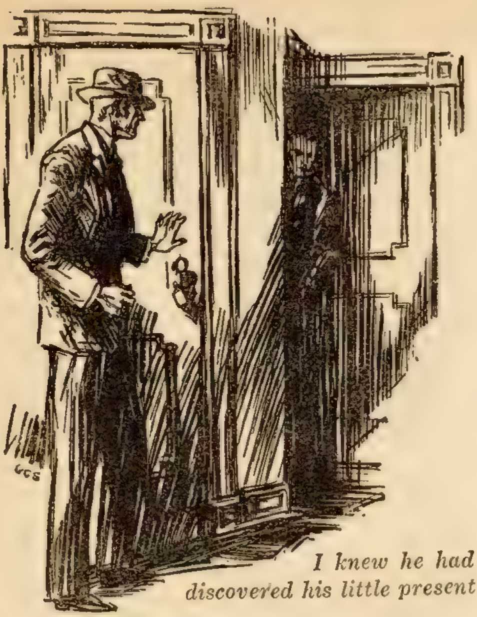
As I write now, the visions flash before me. One can see too much—I sometimes wish I could forget.

SOME ten or eleven years before those terrible nights of '38, there was a young fellow who first flew from New York to Paris, and the world acclaimed him a hero. Mollie says that his fame then was no greater than mine now. I do not know as to that; but it was an ordeal for me, and I was glad when it was over.

There were many of Rodger's men captured. His secret, the scientists say, is plain to them now. His ray is being put to use. As motive power, they claim it may supplant all our existing methods. Perhaps its benefits will some day justify to the world the diabolic use to which its discoverer put it. I am no philosopher. I cannot judge.

Mollie is proud of me in my position with the United States Aeronautical Division. Mike is still in the detective service. He avoids airplanes; he says that one night cured him. Mollie says our little son will some day grow up to command a huge air-liner, which by then will be flying the Great Circle around the world. And our daughter—little Mollie the second, with blue, smiling Irish eyes like her mother's—will some day have a son who will grow up and be the first man to fly to the moon or Mars.

Because, says Mollie, we are an adventurous, fighting family.



I knew he had discovered his little present.

No Story

By H. M. SUTHERLAND

It was a corking tale—a real first-page headliner, involving the daughter of a wealthy and exclusive family, and having all the "deserted at the altar" elements of a real thriller. And yet, because of certain extenuating circumstances, the editor ruled—"no story."

IF MAC PHANN, hard-boiled and exacting city editor of the *Herald*, had not possessed, along with his extraordinarily keen nose for news, a heart attuned to the poignant pains which usually lay behind the sensational stories the staff dug up, the following kaleidoscopic play of life would have been given to the world under a streaming, screaming, black headline. But Mac grinned his crooked grin, and told me to keep the whole business under my hat. "No story" was his verdict.

I had been on the *Herald* only a few months, but I had graduated from the obit column to covering incidents and events of minor importance. That was how it happened that I was sent to cover the suicide of a young girl over in the tenement district. Suicide in this sleepy Southern capital city was not so common, and we usually managed to run a couple of sticks, even if it happened over in the Johnson Hill district. More than once I had picked up "across the railroad" some sob stuff which had brought a word of approval from the boss, and so I hurried over to see if I could make anything out of my assignment.

The address proved to be in a cheap rooming-house section, and when I went in I found that the police were there ahead of me. Evidently they were just finishing their examination, and the detective from headquarters was getting ready to leave. I shot a quick glance about the room for something—a picture, a Bible, anything—

on which to hang my story, and the emotions I experienced were a curious mixture of pathos and resentment—pathos because of the palpable effort the girl had made to give the room a cheerful and pleasant appearance, the taste she had exhibited in the arrangement, so expressive of a hopeful fight against her sordid, drab life in that environment, and resentment at the final deal life had given her.

She was not over twenty, pretty, and having something about her features which bespoke a higher order of intelligence and refinement than was usually found in that immediate section. But I had no time for speculation. I must get facts.

"WHAT do you make of it, Dineen?" I asked the detective.

"Suicide—plain case," he grunted.

"How?"

"Poison of some sort—in this bottle." He produced a small vial not more than three inches in length, in which there were three or four spoonfuls of a clear liquid.

I took the bottle and examined it, but there was nothing on it to distinguish it from a thousand others of its kind. I removed the cork and smelled the contents, vaguely puzzled by the odor of crushed almonds.

"What do you think it is?" demanded Dineen.

"Cyanide—potassium or sodium." I was a bit proud of my knowledge of chemistry.

He shrugged noncommittally. "Poisonous, is it?" he asked after a short pause.

"Very."

At that moment the landlady came into the room accompanied by the patrolman. She was fat, and her features were partly smothered under a huge towel which she had wound about her head, and which was unbelievably dirty. Apparently she had been cleaning out the cook stove or the furnace.

"I want to ask a few questions, Mrs. Clark," said Dineen. "When did you discover that this girl was dead?"

"When I called the police." Her voice was shrill and sharp.

"That was about ten o'clock. When did you see her last? Alive, I mean."

"Yesterday afternoon about four o'clock. She come in complainin' of a headache and went to her room. She didn't come down for supper. This mornin' I found her door locked, and I went in. Then I called you."

"Was anybody with her when she came in?"

"No."

"Where did she work?"

"The cigaret factory."

"All right, Mrs. Clark. Thank you. I reckon that's all. By the way, has she any relatives?"

"None that I ever heard of."

"All right. We'll take care of the case."

Dineen and the patrolman left, and the landlady waited in the door, eying me questioningly.

"I'm from the *Herald,*" I told her, "and I'd like to ask a few more questions if you don't mind."

She shrugged, intimating that she was busy and that I must speak quick. In spite of Dineen's decision, I wasn't quite satisfied. If it hadn't been for the cheerful spirit the room seemed to give off, I might have been convinced that he was right. Anyway, I felt that I should like to dig a little deeper under the surface of things.

"I believe you reported to police headquarters that her name was Rose Henderson."

She nodded.

"Who were her closest friends?"

"I never saw her with any girls, but she has been goin' out with a young man. I don't know who he was, but Rose said he was studyin' to be a dentist."

"What was his name?"

"I don't know, but there's his picture on the dresser."

I went over and picked up the snapshot of a foppish-appearing young man, taken in the act of stepping out of a roadster. The picture was mounted in a cheap frame, evidently from the "five and ten," and I thrust it into my pocket.

"I'd like to take this for a few days," I said. "I don't imagine any one will ask for it."

I DROPPED a dollar bill into the landlady's hand, and left, and by the time I reached the office a definite suspicion had formed in my mind. It was merely a suspicion, for I had absolutely nothing definite upon which to base my conclusions, but I was morally certain that this dental student had given the cyanide to her as a headache cure, and the more I thought about this the more positive I became. But there was one point that I wanted verified, a point that would clear a number of things. Why had he been so anxious to have her out of the way? There must be a motive behind it all.

Stopping at a drug store, I called up Dineen.

"There was something I forgot to ask you a while ago, Dineen," I explained. "Has the coroner held the inquest in that suicide yet?"

"Yep. He left just before you got there."

"What motive did he give for the act?"

"She couldn't face the disgrace," he replied laconically, brutally, and hung up.

I had expected that, but even with the motive cleared, I knew I was going to have stiff work to prove any of my suspicions. There was no doubt that she had taken the poison herself—the condition of the room and everything about her proved that beyond the shadow of a doubt.

My first thought was to lull the fears of the man who had given Rose the cyanide, to give him the feeling of utter security, and then to work out my program. Consequently I wrote the story as a straight suicide, cause unknown. This done, I hurried over to the public library and borrowed a chemical reference book in order to get what data I could on the cyanide salts—particularly potassium cyanide, for I felt certain that this had been the poison used.

Among other things, I found that potassium cyanide was soluble in water, colorless, and taken in any quantity would cause instantaneous death. But the thing that I sought was a little further over, a paragraph to the effect that cyanide salts were used extensively in dentistry. To my mind, this was the last connecting link—my case was complete, but it wouldn't stand up in court. In fact, I doubted if my suspicions were strong enough for the police to consider. There would have to be some positive evidence of murder before they would chance an arrest.

Armed with these facts, I went to the Medical College dispensary and found the student who was in charge of it just on the point of closing shop. He was an affable, pleasant youth and readily answered the questions I asked him, the gist of his reply being a complete confirmation of all my suspicions. Yes, the boys in the dental laboratory classes used cyanide of potassium extensively in gold work. Usually they obtained it in tablet form, and the amounts they received were charged to them. Yes he recognized the photograph. It was Frank Parkis. Frank had gone back home. Some of the boys believed that he had gone to get married. His roommate had seen him with a wedding ring.

"When did he leave?" I queried.

"Yesterday morning."

"Has he been obtaining cyanide during the last week or so?"

"Of course." The student eyed me questioningly. "Why do you want to know that?"

"A young fellow was found dead out near the reservoir," I lied in an effort to quiet his rising suspicions. "He had taken cyanide. This picture was near the body, but there were no identification marks on him. I'm with the *Herald*, and I've been trying to identify him."

"Want me to look at him?" volunteered the student.

"We'll go out to the morgue after supper—if he hasn't been identified by then."

WITH that I hurried back to the office and told Phann the entire story, leaving out nothing. He was convinced after ten minutes that I was right, but he also realized that, until further and more absolute proof was obtained, we were playing with dynamite.

"He's got a perfect alibi," declared Phann thoughtfully, "and he can prove that he was in another town yesterday afternoon when the girl took the cyanide. But he must have given it to her, because she couldn't have gotten it without a prescription. Dineen ought to have known that, and I don't see why he didn't investigate that end."

"He was so cocksure that it was suicide he didn't bother to think about it," I told him. "That was the thing that made me suspicious at the very beginning. She couldn't have obtained the stuff herself. And I'm betting my head that he gave it to her as a headache cure."

Phann scratched his head, gazing at me speculatively.

"I'm giving you *carte blanche* until the case is cleared," he said, coming to a sudden decision. "You're on your own from now on, and I'm not giving you any directions. All I ask is that you get the dope on him, and you're making fair headway already. Hop to it! If I were in your place I'd get on his trail as quickly as possible—tonight. Wait a minute and I'll give you an order on the cashier for a hundred."

I REACHED my destination early the following morning, and on descending from the train I discovered that the town was much larger than I had expected—a city of some five thousand people. It nestled deep in the hills, and the sunlight seemed to sparkle with unusual brilliancy. At breakfast in the hotel an hour later I found the dining-room almost deserted. A pair of typical traveling salesmen were seated at one table, and at another in a corner sat a lone man whose back was toward me.

Before I had finished eating, that lone diner arose and made his way past my table on his way out. With a start I recognized Frank Parkis from the picture I still carried with me. But he had undergone a change since that snapshot had been taken. In place of the smiling, debonair confidence in the photo, there was an expression of haunting fear, and deep black circles under his eyes told of sleepless nights and worried days.

With a bit of careful and cautious questioning, I learned several things that morning, facts which dovetailed in with my theories perfectly. In the first place Frank Parkis was to marry Alicia, only daughter of James M. Halfont, president of the First National Bank, the wedding to take place at high noon on Thursday. It being Tuesday, I knew that I'd have to work fast if I were to pull my stuff in two days.

I wondered if I could bluff him into a confession, but this plan faded when I realized that he knew he was not under police suspicion, and that there was no proof against him. The girl, Rose Henderson, had taken her secret with her, and she was the only one who could have given damaging testimony. If he pulled a stiff front he'd be safe, and I gave him credit for having enough sense to play the game that way.

My one glance at his face that morning had told me that he was weak, cowardly, and yet vicious. His cleft chin and wavering gaze betrayed that. But with all his weakness he was clever and wary, and I knew that I would have to watch my step if I wanted to make a go of things. My greatest fear was that I might frighten him into flight, but I partly allayed this fear with the realization that he would know that flight was a confession. With the wedding only two days off, he would almost be forced to stay, because his flight would create such a stir of excitement that it would arouse the suspicions of even the police.

The town was agog with excitement over the coming wedding. It was to be quite a brilliant affair, with several hundred guests invited and the ceremony to take place in the church at high noon. A series of social functions had been planned in honor of the bride, including a number of showers, dances, and bridge parties, and, all told, the nuptials were creating more than a little excitement.

Being a stranger in the city, I of course received no invitation to these affairs, and I wanted to get acquainted with the bride-to-be and with Frank Parkis, for I had formulated a plan which I hoped might result in his confession. But to accomplish that end it would be necessary for me to know and be with Parkis often. The set with which Alicia Halfont ran was exclusive, and they draw the lines close in those Southern towns.

AFTER a conference with the city editor of the *Gazette*, the local sheet, I was assigned to cover these parties and showers for that paper. On that same night I went out to the Country Club to a dance which was attended by a bevy of youngsters and several of the younger matrons, and I managed to get an introduction to the bride. It was my first attempt at doing society stuff, and it had to be edited quite a bit when I turned it in to the city desk. But I had accomplished something in that I had gotten acquainted with Alicia and Parkis.

Alicia was not a particularly pretty girl, but she was brilliant, and one was likely to forget her rather plain features in watching the play of her mind. She was inclined to be old-fashioned, and I think she was the only girl present whose head was unbobbed. She loved Parkis with all her heart.

Why? I don't know. Perhaps she had not had many beaux even though she was an heiress, and when Parkis had paid court to her she had given him her love without reservation.

But that night, with the excitement and the happiness which were hers, she sparkled with unusual vividness, and she was almost beautiful. Her brown eyes were gay with laughter, and the color ran high in her cheeks. Seeing her happiness and knowing that its life was scheduled to be so short, I felt a sympathy for her that was almost impossible to keep hidden. She was rather frail, and I knew that the blow of the truth would wreck her life irrevocably.

But Parkis, calloused by vanity, cared little for Alicia. Any one could see that without an effort—any one save Alicia, who was so blinded by her affection that she was utterly unable to see a fault in him. He wanted the money she would bring to him, and it was considerable. Her mother had left her a small fortune, and, being the only child, she would inherit Halfont's bank and a slice in almost all of the town's industries.

During the dance Parkis paid more attention to a willowy blonde flapper than he did to his fiancée, and I was not the only one to notice it. More than one of Alicia's friends were on the watch to keep her from seeing too much. I wanted to do nothing so much as I did to invite him outside and kick him to my heart's content.

I wanted to go to Alicia and tell her everything, but I knew that, infatuated as she was, she would never believe the pointing finger of suspicion. I debated the efficiency of going to Halfont himself and giving him a warning, but I discarded that plan as unfeasible. He would demand an immediate investigation, and the time wasn't yet ripe to make direct accusations. Proof was lacking, and I knew that Parkis could sue if the charge could not be substantiated.

THAT night I managed to have my room in the hotel changed to one adjoining Parkis', and I had not been in long before I heard him enter. The partition, as is often the case in small-town hotels, was paper-thin, and I could hear all that went on with gratifying clarity. He went to bed soon, but not to sleep. For an hour I heard him tossing and mumbling, and I know he smoked at least a dozen cigarets before he finally managed to doze off.

At three o'clock I was staring into the darkness over my bed, unable to go to sleep, when I had an idea, and I resolved to put it into play immediately. In my bag I had the book I had obtained from the library back home, the book from which I had received my data on cyanide of potassium. Softly I slipped from bed, turned on the lights, and opened the bag.

Tearing out the page which was devoted to the poisonous effects and deadliness of cyanide of potassium, I placed it in a plain white envelope and sealed it. Then tiptoeing outside, I went to Parkis' door and knocked until I heard a movement in the bed, and then I slipped the envelope under his door and fled noiselessly to my room. Pressing my ear to the partition, I heard him turn on the light and get up. An instant later I caught the sound of tearing paper—and then a long silence.

It seemed to me that ten almost endless minutes passed before I heard his hall door creak on its hinges, and I could imagine him peering fearfully into the darkness of the hallway. Then he closed his door sharply and locked it, as if to keep out the Nemesis that was forming a net about him. A few seconds later I heard him pull down the window and the shade and begin pacing backward and forward across the room. The scrape of his soft bedroom slippers on the floor was never ending, and I am certain it continued throughout the entire night.

Several times before I went to sleep I heard him slip over to the door, and then all sounds would cease, as if he were listening for the approach of his accuser or the police. Then he would resume his steady pacing of the room again. I tried to remain awake, but it was impossible. When I awoke it was well along in the morning and the sun was shining through my window on the bed.

After breakfast I made a casual round of the hotel, the drugstore, and various other popular loafing places in the town, but my search was futile. Parkis had disappeared, and a few cautious questions brought me the information that he had not been seen since the night before. I couldn't believe that he had slipped out during the night and taken his departure. That would have been a confession, and surely he had sense enough to know that without evidence no case could be made out against him.

But in spite of all my conjectures and beliefs one fact stared me in the face, and that was that he was gone. I had overplayed my hand right at the beginning by frightening him to the point at which he couldn't face the situation any longer. To make certain of this I went around to the garage where he kept his roadster, and my relief was profound when I discovered that it was still there. At the station I learned that no one had boarded the early train, and I knew that he was still in town, probably in his room and fearful of coming out.

But a little later I saw him in the drugstore, drinking a seltzer, and I was startled at the change the night had wrought in his face. His eyes were bloodshot, and there were lines of worry and fatigue about them which had changed his entire appearance. In addition, his movements were furtive and nervous, and his trembling fingers spilled part of the contents of the glass as he raised it to his lips.

THAT afternoon when I reported at the office the city editor had an assignment for me. Since Alicia's father was president of the First National and counted among his friends the wealthiest people in that section, the wedding presents were unusually beautiful and expensive. Of course, the public generally would be greatly interested in these presents, and the editor had obtained Alicia's consent to run a feature article on them.

It was some time about the middle of the afternoon when I went to the Halfont home and Alicia led me into the library where the gifts were exhibited. She was proud of everything that had been given her, but she hesitated and seemed reluctant to give the story for fear that the public would think it bad taste. She seemed to hate ostentation and show, and in this she was the exact opposite of her father, who was a self-made man and proud of that fact. In truth, my temporary boss had obtained permission to run the story from him, and not from Alicia.

Outstanding among the presents was a massive silver service set, a gift from Halfont, which somehow seemed to glitter as pompously as the donor. He was lavish with Alicia, and it was understood that he was also giving her a home and a substantial block of stock in the First National. But this service set stood out so prominently that it caught my eye as soon as I entered the room.

AS WE were looking over the display Parkis entered and drew near Alicia, apparently finding a haven of refuge in her very presence, for he clung tightly to her arm and followed her—every step she took. She noticed the dark circles under his eyes and the haunted expression, and her solicitude was quick and deep. She begged him to see a doctor, but he laughed mirthlessly and told her that it was the late hours to which he had been unaccustomed, and that he'd quickly recover after the wedding. This seemed to alloy her fears, and she continued pointing out and explaining some of the presents to me.

At last we came to that service set her father had given her, and I noticed that each piece boasted of a gold inlay monogram. Alicia was quick to apologize for that, declaring frankly that she didn't like the gold, but that she didn't want to hurt her father's feelings. That gave me an opening which made my heart jump. I couldn't let a chance like that slip by.

"Why don't you remove the inlay," I suggested casually. "Of course, that would leave the monogram still there, but it would just be carved in the silver and would really be pretty. You could do that yourself."

"I can?" She was interested. "How?"

"There's a chemical which will remove it easily if placed on it with a little water. It is very poisonous and is a bit difficult to obtain, but Mr. Parkis here would have no difficulty in getting it for you, since dentists use it very extensively."

"What is this chemical?" she asked. "I believe I'll try it."

"Potassium cyanide."

I wanted to look at Parkis' face, but I didn't dare just then. Alicia went on chattering away, but I didn't hear a word she was saying. I ventured a quick glance at Parkis, and his face had drained to a ghastly white. He was staring at me with eyes widened by fear and terror, and his entire body seemed frozen rigid.

"Will you get me some of that stuff this afternoon, Frank?" I heard her say, and with a supreme effort Parkis brought his attention back to her. He nodded, but didn't dare trust his voice.

"Better be very careful with it," I warned. "It's highly poisonous, but it is very useful. Potassium cyanide is one of the best methods—and quickest—of obtaining gold," I ended pointedly.

A few minutes later I took my leave, and Parkis offered to drive me downtown in his car. I accepted, and for a little while I was certain that we would crash. His nerves were in shreds, but we made it without accident, and several times *en route* I was positive that he was on the point of questioning me, but couldn't quite bring himself to it.

After the rehearsal that night at the church there was a reception for the bridal party which

I attended long enough to get a running story of the affair, for I had to make the mailing edition with it. I saw Parkis there, and he was like a hunted thing, keeping out of the glare of the lights and trying to watch everything that went on. He had been drinking, and this had taken the pallor from his checks and supplanted it with high color. Every time I looked at him he was staring at me, and I knew that he had become convinced that I was the man who had slipped the envelope under his door the preceding night.

That night at the office I managed through the efforts of the city editor to get a prescription from a physician for a small bottle of cyanide of potassium, and when I went to my room about midnight I tied that package to Parkis' doorknob. An hour or so later I heard him come up the stairway and halt at his door. He gave expression to a muttered imprecation, and I knew he had discovered his little present.

I was hoping that my program would force him to a confession, and I had determined to write a not the following morning, telling him that if he hadn't made a complete confession by noon, he would be exposed during the ceremony. I didn't see how he could stand that suspense much longer. His nerves were on the point of breaking, and no human could stand that strain indefinitely. The havoc in his face told me that.

Once more he took up his ceaseless pacing of the room, backward and forward, like a caged tiger. For an hour I lay there listening to him, and I had to steel myself against a surge of sympathy for him. He deserved nothing less than he was receiving. It was just retribution, and yet—somehow I couldn't help but feel for him, writhing on that rack of agony.

At last everything grew quiet, and I wondered if the liquor he had consumed had not at last overpowered him and given him the thing that his nerves had been crying for so long—sleep. And I was glad he had gained that respite.

THE next morning at breakfast he was absent, and I hung about the hotel all morning, waiting for his appearance. At a quarter of eleven I realized that I must act, because the ceremony was to take place at noon, and I had less than an hour to force him to a confession. When I went to the clerk and asked him if he had seen Parkis, he told me that the maid had reported his room still locked.

Together we went up and the clerk knocked at the door twice, sharply, but we got no response. With a skeleton key we opened the door and saw Parkis lying stretched out on the bed, fully dressed. I walked over and looked down at him, and in his hand was the vial which I had fastened to his doorknob. I touched his hand, and it was as cold as ice. *The vial was empty.*

That same night I reported to Mac Phann back home and told him the entire story. He leaned back in his chair and closed his eyes for several seconds. Then he straightened and shrugged.

"It's a whale of a good yarn all right," he declared softly, "and it would show up Dineen and the gang at headquarters for fair. I'd like to run it, but from your description of Alicia—well, why should we drag her name through the muck?"

And on the assignment book he wrote after my name—*no story.*

The Phantom Reporter

By ROBERT W. SNEDDON

SIR EDMUND HORNBY had a strange experience while he was Chief Judge of the Consular Court in Shanghai, China. It was his custom to allow reporters to come to his residence to get his written judgments for the next day's paper. Among the newspaper men was a rather reticent and conscientious one.

On the evening of the event the judge wrote out a certain judgment, and instructed his butler, should this reporter call, to give him the envelope. Sir Edmund then went to bed, and to sleep. Awakened by a tap at his bedroom door, and thinking it to be the butler's, he said: "Come in."

To his amazement there entered the reporter. The judge told him he had mistaken the room, and that the judgment was with the butler. The reporter, who was deadly pale but appeared quite sober, apologized for his intrusion, and, though again told to go to the butler, insisted: "If you knew all the circumstances you would give me a precis of the judgment. My time is short."

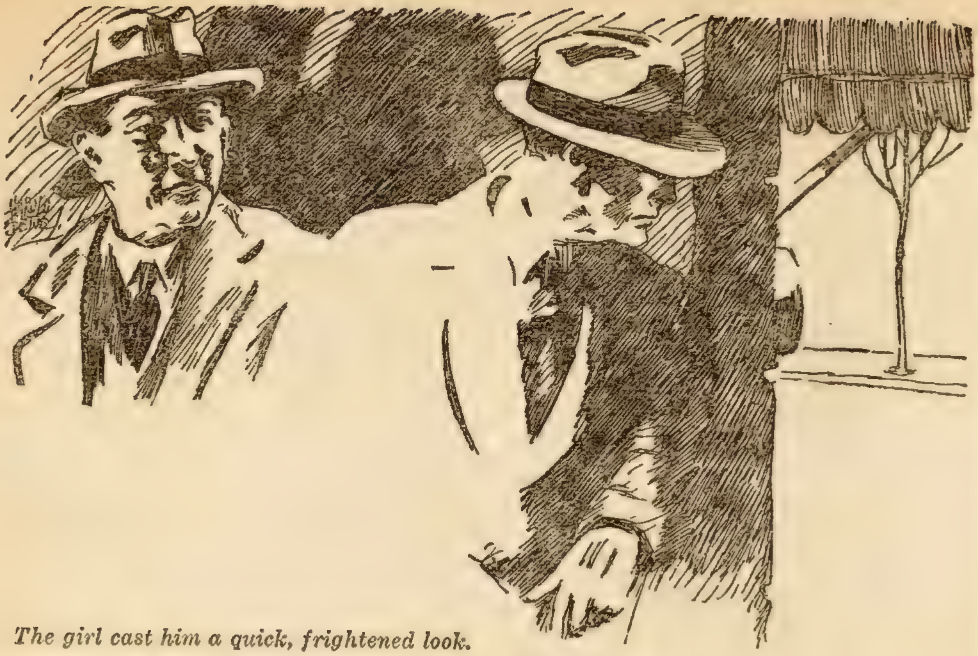
"You don't seem to care about my time," snapped the judge. "This is the last time I shall ever allow a reporter in my house."

The reporter raised a ghastly face. "This is the last time I shall ever see you anywhere."

The judge at last gave the desired precis, which the reporter noted in shorthand. When the reporter went the judge looked at his watch. The hour was 1:30.

Next morning the first news which greeted the judge in court was that the reporter was dead. He had been working late. At 1:30 his wife, who had looked in on him several times, had seen that his head was on the table. She had shaken him, and discovered he was dead. In front of him had lain his note-book. The doctor, called in, had pronounced him dead over an hour.

The note-book was shown to the judge. It contained an entry on the case in question, and a few lines of indecipherable shorthand. It was proved that the reporter had not left his home that night.



The girl cast him a quick, frightened look.

The Other Glove

By LESLIE McFARLANE

A TWO-PART STORY—PART I

In the afternoon Craig Scott declared his intention of marrying beautiful Margaret Ellery, and was summarily ordered from her crabbed father's shop. In the evening old Nathan Ellery lay dead, with his head smashed in. And the police were hot on the young man's trail.

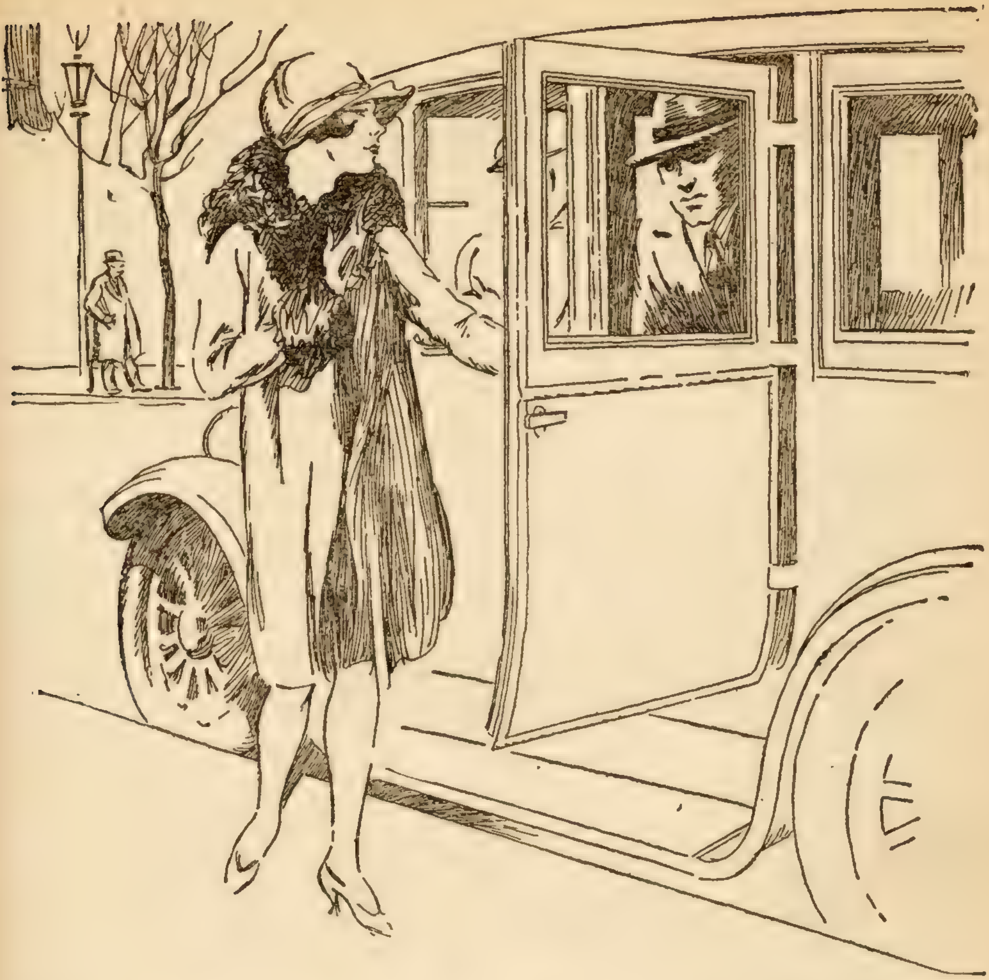
CHAPTER I

A LATE VISITOR

TEN o'clock!

The ponderous notes of a distant bell tolled faintly across the white roofs. The wind was rising, and little veils of snow raced across the cobbled surface of the dark street, whipped to flight by the chilly gusts that pounced from dark corners and swept viciously through the alleyways.

Patrolman Heeney strolled moodily down his beat and tried to warm himself with thoughts of hot meatpie, fragrant coffee, and an easy



chair by the kitchen stove, all of which awaited him some hours hence—and succeeded only in confirming his previous opinion that it was a dirty night.

Save for himself the street was deserted. Warm lights shone from the frosted upper windows. Other people stayed indoors on a night like this, but the weary harness bull had to pound the cobbles just the same, be it fair weather or foul. And Montreal in winter has a preponderance of such cold and stormy nights. Patrolman Heeney hoped that Alex, in the café, had not forfotten to save a drink for him.

He halted in the shadow of an alley just as a tall, dark figure emerged from the gloom beyond the radiance of the corner light across the street. The young man did not see him, but in spite of the fact that the youth had his slouch hat drawn down over his eyes and his collar turned up about his ears, Heeney recognized him.

FOR some time past Scott Craig had been "hanging around," as Patrolman Heeney put it, with the daughter of old Nate Ellery, the pawnbroker. That afternoon, Heeney knew, there had been a row in the shop of the three gilt balls, and Scott Craig had been the center of it. The reason for the row had been the announcement of Craig that he and Margaret Ellery had decided to marry.

The results had been devastating. From what Patrolman Heeney could gather, Craig had been ordered from the shop and had been threatened with arrest if he ever showed his nose about the neighborhood again. Up to that time the rumpus had been without blows, but Sam Bloom, a neighborhood youth who had been casting calf's eyes at Margaret Ellery for some time, had happened to enter the shop, had spoken out of turn, and had received a hearty punch on the jaw from his rival.

Thereupon the unlucky suitor had walked away, but not before telling Ellery that the marriage would take place in spite of all parental objections.

As Heeney watched the young man going up the street, he wondered at Craig's temerity in returning to the vicinity so soon.

"Oh, well," he reflected, "young men in love are stubborn lads. They won't admit when they're licked."

He was aware of a certain sympathy for the youth. Craig was a clean-cut lad, and it was notorious throughout the neighborhood that old Nate was an obstinate, hard-bitten crank.

"Mebbe he's going to try to reason with the old skinflint," reflected the officer. "Might as well try to reason with a grindstone."

He saw the youth turn down the little walk that led to the side entrance of the pawnbroker's shop. The store was in darkness.

"Can't be going to see the girl," mused Patrolman Heeney. "She went uptown an hour ago, and she ain't got back yet."

He strolled on down the street and cast a sidelong glance toward the gloomy little alley that divided the pawnbroker's store from the building adjacent. He could see no one, but he thought he heard a door close softly. Patrolman Heeney beamed benevolently and passed on.

It could not have been more than half an hour later when he saw Scott Craig leave the place. The officer had taken refuge from the wind and the cold in the doorway of a shop opposite the pawnbroker's place, and as he stood there, shivering, he saw the young man emerge from the alleyway.

There was something furtive about his movements, but Patrolman Heeney attributed that to a natural desire on the part of the youth to escape from the neighborhood undetected. Perhaps, after all, he had gone to see the girl. Perhaps Nate Ellery was out. In the shadow of the doorway, the officer watched the young man pass beneath the light at the corner. His chin was buried deep in his coat collar, his hands were thrust into his pockets, as he hastened down the street.

"Not takin' any chances on any one seein' him come away from there," Heeney muttered to himself. "It's a shame a young lad can't come to see his girl without sneakin' in and out like a burglar, just because of a grouchy divvil like old Nate. Oh, well!" The patrolman sighed and went on his way, reflecting on the shortcomings of grouchy divvils in general.

THE wind was rising. Drifting snow skimmed across the surface of the street. Patrolman Heeney shivered.

At the end of his beat he turned and retraced his steps. It was a dull night. Even Goulet's tavern had been free of disturbance. Goulet was the neighborhood bad man, tavern-keeper, gambler, gangster—a surly individual with one ear. He was the bane of Patrolman Heeney's life. But to-night it was too cold for mischief.

The officer was still half a block from the pawnshop when he saw a girl run out of the alley. She was hatless and coatless, and as she hastened out into the street she looked to right and left. Even at that distance he recognized her as Margaret Ellery.

She ran toward him. There was something wrong, that was evident. Patrolman Heeney quickened his stride.

She was a beautiful girl, this Margaret, and now her dark beauty was intensified by terror. She broke into a sob as she stumbled toward him.

"What's the matter?" asked the patrolman swiftly.

"Oh, Mr. Heeney, come quick! Please come. Quick!"

She seized his arm and turned, urging him toward the shop.

"What's gone wrong, miss?"

"He's dead!"

"Who?"

"Father!"

Without another word Heeney raced down the alley and thrust open the side door leading into the living quarters back of the shop.

"Where?" he snapped.

"Upstairs," sobbed the girl. "In his office. I just found him."

Heeney reached the steps at a bound and rushed upstairs into the narrow hall. There was an open door at his left, and a light shone in the room beyond.

He strode to the door of the little office.

Nathan Ellery lay sprawled face downward on the floor by the upturned chair, and in the light of the shaded desk lamp Heeney caught the ruby gleam of blood. He knelt and turned the limp body over.

The dead man's head sagged back and the sightless eyes stared at the ceiling. The pallid temple had been crushed by a vicious blow. The thin lips were drawn back from the yellow teeth in a frozen snarl.

Mechanically the officer drew away, relaxing his grasp, and the body slumped silently onto the cold linoleum. Heeney saw a crumpled glove lying by the blood stain on the floor. In the silent, fusty office, with its disorderly heaps of papers on the rickety desk, the pawnbroker was ignoble in death.

Heeney straightened up. This was a case for Headquarters, of course. He eyed the glove with interest, but did not disturb it.

THE girl was coming slowly up the stairs. In a moment she was standing in the doorway, swaying weakly, her eyes wide with fear.

"He is dead?"

Heeney nodded. "When did you find him?"

"Just a little while ago. I—I had been out."

"For how long?"

"I went uptown on an errand after tea. When I came back"—she looked at the body and shuddered—"he was there."

"So you came out and called me?"

"Yes."

"Any one with him when you left here?"

"No. He came up to his office after tea to work."

"So he was alone here for about how long?"

"Two or three hours."

"Was any one coming to see him to-night?"

"Not that I know of."

"Scott Craig here to-night?" asked Heeney suddenly.

The girl straightened up as though

she had received an electric shock.

"Scott Craig? Why do you ask that?"

"He had an argument with your father this afternoon, didn't he?"

"Yes, but—you don't mean to say you think he could have done this?"

"I'm not sayin' anything, miss," observed Heeney. "I guess I'll call up the office and have 'em send down some men."

But the girl stepped toward him anxiously.

"It wasn't Scott," she said, in a sort of frantic bewilderment. "It wasn't him. I *know* it wasn't."

"Listen, miss," said Heeney kindly. "He was here to-night."

"To-night?"

The officer nodded. "I saw him—see? He was here while you was uptown. He must have left just before you got back. It looks bad."

"But he *couldn't* have been here. Why should he come here? Oh, it couldn't have been him you saw!" The girl seemed suddenly terrified. She sat down in a chair, as though all strength had suddenly been drained from her body.

"I saw him, miss," said Heeney firmly. "Of course, maybe he has an explanation. Maybe it was all an accident."

"It wasn't him. I *know* it wasn't. He didn't kill my father."

She got up nervously and knelt impulsively by the body. Her slim fingers stroked the dead man's face. Her own countenance was white and rigid, and tears streamed down her cheeks.

"Oh, Father, Father!" she murmured brokenly.

The officer took her gently by the arm.

"Better keep back, miss," he said. "They won't want anything to be disturbed. Finger-prints and the like, you know."

He helped her to her feet. She was crying. Patrolman Heeney led her from the room.

"Show me where the telephone is," he said, not unkindly. "I'll have to call Headquarters."

SHE led the way downstairs and showed him the telephone behind the counter out in the darkened shop. There Patrolman Heeney put in a call for Headquarters and tersely outlined the situation. Then he went back into the kitchen, where the girl sat by the table, her head buried in her arms.

"That row with Craig this afternoon," he said—"what was it all about?"

She looked up, dabbing at her eyes with a handkerchief.

"He—he asked Father if we could be married."

"Yeah? And your father said no!"

"He was going to put Scott out of the place. And Scott told him that if we didn't get married with his consent, we'd get married without it."

"What did he say to that?"

"He got terribly angry. He said if Scott came within a block of the place he'd have him arrested. Scott told him we'd elope."

"So he put him out?"

"There was quite a crowd around the front of the shop. Anybody can tell you about the fuss. Scott walked away."

"You thought quite a lot of him, eh?"

She nodded.

"Wanted to marry him?"

Again she nodded. "Father was unreasonable."

"What did he have against him?"

"Nothing in particular. He was unreasonable, for Scott—well, he's fine. Father has always been that way. Any young man who ever wanted to take me out—he'd order him away."

"Well," sighed Heeney, "he ordered away one too many this time."

She looked up sharply.

"It wasn't Scott."

"Maybe," said the officer, shrugging. "There's maybe more to this than I can see, but it looks bad, miss. He came here to-night, you see, and I guess he and your father had another row. It looks bad."

"It *wasn't* him. It wasn't." Her hands were clenched so tightly that the knuckles showed white. "I *know* it wasn't."

"I don't blame you for stickin' up for him," observed Heeney. "We will wait and see."

IN A few minutes the men from Headquarters arrived. Tim Lucas, thin and keen-eyed, and Joe Mudge, thick-set and ruddy, clumped up the steps and into the kitchen.

A few perfunctory questions, and they made their way upstairs with Heeney. Lucas glanced at the body and swooped upon the glove that lay on the floor.

"Something to work upon, anyway," he commented. He straightened up and looked down at the corpse. "He got a fine wallop on the head with a club, by the looks of things. It didn't take more than one to finish him, either. Where's that girl?"

"Downstairs."

"We'll talk to her before the coroner comes."

Back in the kitchen, Lucas took charge.

"You found the body?" he shot at Margaret.

"Yes."

"When?"

"When I returned home."

"Where were you all evening?"

"I was out. When I came back I found him."

Patrolman Heeney interjected: "I saw a guy come in and leave while she was away."

Lucas looked up. "Why didn't you tell me that before? Did you get a good look at him?"

"Yeah, I know him. Name is Scott Craig. Friend of Miss Ellery."

"Ha! I want to know more about this."

For ten minutes the detectives hurled questions. Soon they had the whole story. By the time the coroner arrived the detectives had it firmly settled in their minds that if Scott Craig were not the actual murderer, he was at least a fit subject for questioning. From the girl they secured the address of her lover, in spite of her insistence that he was innocent.

"I don't blame you for thinkin' he hadn't anything to do with this, miss," said Lucas abruptly. "But we gotta go by the facts—see?—and they look bad. We're going to ask him how come he was here to-night, and what happened."

But by midnight they had failed to locate Scott Craig. Inquiry at the address given them revealed the fact that he had given up his room that day and had left for parts unknown.

The hunt was on!

CHAPTER II

INTRODUCING A SCRIBE

IN THE room of *The Montreal Sun* a cub reporter, Hugh Dean by name, tapped out the last line of his story:

> The funeral will be held Thursday from the late residence, interment at Cote des Neiges Cemetery.

Then he ticked off "30," flipped the sheet from his typewriter, and impaled it on the copy-desk hook with a sigh.

"What's that?" asked Winters, the copy-reader. "Another obit?"

"Do I ever get anything else to write?" grinned Dean.

"They keep you on the small stuff. Never mind, kid. They'll give you a decent assignment some of these days."

"It's about time. I've been writing nothing but sermons and obituaries ever since I came here."

"Somebody's gotta do it, and it's usually wished on the new man." Winters tamped tobacco into his pipe and groped for a match. "Gad, I remember how I used to sit with a phone receiver glued to my ear, listening to some hard-boiled undertaker reeling off the dope on the day's stiffs, night after night. And how I covered all the Methodist churches in town for three months, sermons and all, without ever stepping inside one." He lit his pipe, seized pencil and paper again, and settled down to work once more. "We've all got to go through that grind."

"Oh, I don't mind it so much," said Dean, turning down his desk, "but I wish they'd give me a chance at something big, for a change."

"Stay with it, kid." Winters scribbled a head, jammed a roll of copy into a cylinder, and shot it up the tube. "All cleaned up?"

"Yep."

"Beat it, then. If the old man sees you hanging around, he'll give you a mess of work, even if it is near two o'clock."

Dean was struggling into his coat when he saw Jenkins, the police reporter, shamble over to the desk, toss a few sheets of copy casually toward Winters, and turn to him.

"Going out, Balzac?"

This was the one pleasantry the dour Jenkins ever permitted himself. To him, all cub reporters were aspiring novelists, and in the ten years he had been with *The Sun* he had never been known to call a cub reporter anything other than Balzac. When the nickname was dropped the newcomer could consider himself in the fold, his cubhood ended.

"Just leaving."

"I'll walk down with you."

JENKINS and Dean were always the last of the local staff to leave—Dean because his grist of obituaries, church notes, and "small stuff" demanded hours of laborious telephoning and typewriting in spite of the insignificance of his copy, and Jenkins because he had to be on the job until press-time in case of battle, murder, or sudden death. Dean was through for the night, but it would be an hour before Jenkins would be at liberty, for he still had to make the final round of his beat, write his late copy, and put in his last-minute calls.

He was a silent, thick-set man with heavy features and a sleepy expression, always the last on duty in the evening, always the last to leave in the small hours.

Jenkins seemed to live in another world. He would shamble in to his desk at odd intervals, clatter spasmodically at his typewriter, and disappear again in his mysterious haunts of police station corridors and Headquarters offices. The other reporters saw him but seldom, yet morning after morning there was tangible evidence of Jenkins' existence in the form of front-page stories of hold-ups, suicides, shootings — the crime stuff that readers "eat up." Dean envied him with the deference due a hero.

"Good night, kid," growled Winters, as they crossed the local room.

"Good night."

"If you run across any murders on the way home, give us a call. Jenk only gave us one to-night."

"No such luck."

They waited silently for the elevator. Ten years of life under the glare of electric lights and in the night shadows had given Jenkins an unhealthy pallor; ten years of association with the sin and misery and crime of Montreal had given him an inscrutable and misanthropic expression. He looked as though nothing in the world could ever interest him any more.

"Where do you live, Balzac?" asked Jenkins, when they had reached the street.

"Up on St. Denis Street, for the present."

"Doesn't Klein live up that way, too?"

Klein was the City Hall man.

"I'm staying in his apartment while he's on his holidays."

"Yeah?" growled Jenkins disinterestedly. "Know him well?"

"Cousin. He helped me get on *The Sun.*"

"SOME favor that was! Pity Klein's away. A story broke to-night that he'd like to know about."

"What was that?"

"Oh, a friend of his got in a jam. They're looking for him in a murder case."

"Gosh! Big story?"

"Hot enough," Jenkins admitted reluctantly.

"What's it all about?"

"An old pawnbroker got knocked off. Seems this friend of Klein's—a guy by the name of Scott Craig—was rushing the pawnbroker's daughter, and the old man tossed him out on his ear yesterday afternoon. They had a big row in the shop, and the Romeo got the air. That was at about six o'clock. Well, along about half-past ten the pawnbroker's daughter came whoopin' out to the cop on the beat and told him she'd just found the old guy in his office with his head caved in."

"Murdered, eh?"

"Oh, he got a beautiful slam! I saw him. One wallop finished him. The girl said she'd been out most of the evening and had just come in. Then the cop on the beat opened up and said he'd seen this chap Craig going into the shop by the back way at ten o'clock and sneakin' out about a quarter of an hour later. So that's that. The doc that examined the body said the old guy had been killed in the last hour. So they're hunting for Craig."

"They haven't got him yet?"

"Mebbe they have by now. They found out he'd moved out of his room late in the afternoon and told his landlady he was going to Ontario. A ticket clerk down at Windsor Station said a fellow answering to his description had bought a couple of tickets at about nine o'clock. Way the headquarters boys figure it out is that he and the girl were planning to get married and clear out that night. Matter of fact, they've traced it up that he bought a marriage license and her name's on it, so that pretty well settles it. Then they figure he went up to talk to the old lad about it again and they had another row and Craig soaked him, then beat it without waitin' for the girl to show up."

"Maybe the girl was there, too."

"She wouldn't stand by him for killin' her own father, would she?

And, anyway, she's got an alibi. Said she was uptown on an errand, and when she told what store she was in they dug up the clerk and he identified her and said she'd been in around a quarter of ten. If she took a street car back home, she could have been there by ten o'clock, but she said she walked, and it's a long way. No, the girl's O. K. The cop said he didn't see her come back, but he was at the other end of his beat between ten-twenty and ten-thirty, so that does not cut any ice."

"It makes a darn' good story."

"Human interest. There's nothing like a love affair to pep up a murder." Jenkins paused at the corner. "Well, I go down this way. Mebbe they've landed Craig by now."

"I guess he won't get very far away."

"They'll nab him. But it'll be just my luck to have him hooked just about an hour after press-time, so the afternoon papers will get the story. G' night."

And with that Jenkins slouched away in the darkness.

DEAN went on toward St. Denis Street, his thoughts occupied with the story he had just heard. From a newspaper standpoint, it was a good yarn, and he knew it would be smeared all over the front page of *The Sun* that morning. He wished he had the writing of it, although well aware he could not do it the justice of which Jenkins was capable. It was the sort of yarn that made newspaper work worth while, and he envied Jenkins from the bottom of his heart because these stories came his way as a matter of course.

Dean sighed. Some day he might be pounding out tales of crime for the front page, some day he might achieve the glory of a two-column head, perhaps even the dizzy eminence of a by-line, but that day seemed far distant. For the time being, he must be content with chronicling the fusty deaths of obscure persons, the petty meetings of church societies, and the dreary platitudes of the clergy.

He was feeling quite depressed by the time he reached the apartment building. There was snow in the moon, and a gusty wind in the street. Slaty clouds streamed across the sky in an endless and hurried procession. He looked up to where the gloomy mass of Mount Royal rose black in the night, and the giant cross on its rocky pinnacle flared in electric silence, a blazing benediction upon the sleeping city. Out of the darkness stole the mournful notes of a solemn bell, floating across the gray jungle of steel and stone, across the sullen St. Lawrence. It was two o'clock.

Dean went inside and trudged upstairs.

It was a cold night, and he was glad he was going to the warm cheerfulness of Klein's snug apartment instead of the frigid desolation of his own furnished room. It was very good of Klein to suggest that Dean occupy the apartment, and he was appreciative of the other reporter's thoughtfulness. As he unlocked the door, it was with a mental resolution that when he should some day be a great feature writer he would have a comfortable apartment of his own, and that he would be invariably considerate of struggling cub reporters.

IT WAS not until the door thudded softly behind him that he saw the figure silhouetted against the gray rectangle of the sitting-room window. It was perfectly rigid, the figure of a man.

Dean stiffened, hesitated warily, then snapped on the lights.

Immediately the gloom and the gray disappeared as the room leaped into color. The warm, rose-tinted curtains, the shaded lamp, the brown, stuffed chairs, the green and black books on the table, all flashed comfortably into view. The menacing silhouette was transformed from a shadowy anonymity to a tall, fair-haired young man who stood tensely facing Dean, his back to the window.

NEITHER moved. They gazed at each other in silence.

"Aren't you in the wrong place?" asked the reporter finally.

The fair-haired young man fingered his necktie nervously. "This is Dick Klein's apartment, isn't it?" he asked, in a voice that trembled slightly.

Dean nodded. "He's away just now. I'm living here until he comes back."

"He won't be back to-night?" asked the other, an expression of dismay crossing his face.

"He won't be back for a week."

"I see. I—I wanted to talk to him."

Dean came over to the table.

"How did you get in?" he asked quietly.

"I'm a chum of Dick's. He had a duplicate key that he usually left on the transom in case I ever dropped around when he was out. But I had no idea he was out of the city. I haven't been in touch with him the past two weeks."

"Is there anything I can do?"

The intruder looked down at the rug. "It all depends," he said. "The real reason I came here was to lie low for a couple of days."

"Why?"

"I got into a bad mix-up to-night. The police may be looking for me."

"Your name isn't Scott Craig, is it?" asked Dean incredulously.

"Yes. You—you heard about it?"

Mechanically Dean took off his hat and coat, removed his gloves and overshoes, offered the other man a cigaret. Craig took it with fingers that trembled.

"We may as well sit down." Dean indicated a chair, and Craig sank into its depths without a word.

Dean struck a match, gave his guest a light, then lit his own cigaret.

"It's a funny thing," he remarked. "A friend was just telling me about the case a few minutes ago."

"Why?"

"The police reporter on *The Sun.*"

"Do you work on *The Sun*, too?"

"Yes."

"What did he have to say?"

"They're looking for you all right, but they have an idea you got out of the city."

Dean puffed reflectively for a moment. "I don't know what to do about this," he said at last.

"Are you going to turn me over to the police?"

"I should—shouldn't I?"

"For your own protection, I suppose. Klein wouldn't."

"Why?"

"Because he knows me well enough to be sure I'm not a murderer."

"How did it happen?"

CRAIG passed the back of his hand wearily across his brow. "We found the body, you see. That's what makes it awkward. That's why I cleared out."

"Tell me from the beginning."

"Margaret and I wanted to get married. She's his daughter."

"Ellery's daughter?"

"The pawnbroker's. Yes. We wanted to get married, but he wouldn't hear of it. He didn't like me. I'll tell you what sort of a fellow he was. A crusty old man without a friend in the world but her. He was a tough, tight, crabbed old rascal, and he was so wrapped up in her that he wanted her with him always. Wouldn't hear of her getting married to me. Just plain jealousy, that's all. I guess he expected her to give up her own life and look after him for the rest of his days. Selfish! We both tried to make him listen to reason, but there was no arguing with him. So we decided to elope. I got a good job in Ontario, gave up my place here and my room in Montreal, bought tickets, got a marriage license, and went to the pawnshop with Margaret just before six o'clock to-night to make a last try at getting his consent."

"And he refused?"

"Threw me out of the shop. Wouldn't let me start to talk. It was a humiliating sort of row, for a crowd gathered out in front and a pimply-faced little beast by the name of Sam Bloom, one of those neighborhood sheiks who had been trying to make up to Margaret, butted in to help him. I couldn't hit the old man, but I certainly did hand Bloom a beauty. I knocked him down and walked out of the shop. That's the first part of it."

"And the second?"

"I came back. I had told Margaret I'd call for her at ten o'clock. Then we were going to get married and take the night train. That was, in case we *had* to elope. And when he put me out of the shop, that was the only thing left to do. I went to the shop, and Margaret was there. She had been out since after tea, but she had just come back, and she said the old man was asleep, for she hadn't heard him moving about after she came in. We were almost ready to go when she got sort of soft-hearted—you know what girls are like—and she wanted to go upstairs and look in at him before she went. So she found him——"

"Dead?"

"Murdered. He was in his office. Some one had clubbed him over the head. There was nothing we could do."

"So you cleared out."

"I was going to get the police at first, but Margaret wouldn't let me. She said they'd be sure to accuse me. Seeing Ellery didn't like me, and I was going to run away with his daughter, and seeing we'd had this row in the afternoon—it would look bad, you can't deny it. She said they'd be sure to think we'd had a final quarrel and that I killed him. She persuaded me to go away, and I promised her I'd lay low for a few days to see how things turned out."

"Not bad reasoning, at that," said Dean reflectively. "I don't know whether I'd call it good policy or not. So you cleared out and here you are."

"Here I am."

"They could make a strong case against you." He then told the fugitive how Margaret had protected him in her story to the police. "If it hadn't been for the cop on the beat seeing you, everything would have been all right."

"I could give myself up and see it through."

"It would be foolish to do that now. It would contradict her story. You might *both* be held."

Craig got up and paced nervously across the room. "I should have given myself up in the first place," he said. "I see that now. But she insisted. She was almost hysterical, you see. She thought it was best for me to go away. And perhaps it was. How could we know the policeman had seen me? It's a bad tangle."

"Stay here until the morning. Perhaps after you've had a good sleep you'll be able to think more clearly. The police won't be likely to find you here."

They heard the muffled tread of footsteps on the stairs. Dean looked up sharply.

"Quiet!" he cautioned.

The footsteps became louder, they clumped heavily down the hall, they stopped before the door of the apartment. Some one knocked sharply.

CHAPTER III

ACCESSORY AFTER THE FACT

"HIDE!" whispered Dean, as he sprang silently out of his chair.

In one swift movement Craig was at the window. There was not a sound as he opened it.

"Just a minute," called out Dean, trying to achieve a sleepy voice. He tore off his necktie, loosened his collar, slipped out of his coat and waistcoat, then snatched up a dressing gown. He glanced back in time to see Craig disappearing through the window. The breeze stirred the curtains.

Dean padded over and closed the window, snapping the catch.

The knocking at the door sounded again, impatient this time, it seemed.

"All right. All right." He went over to the door and opened it.

Two men in heavy overcoats and slouch hats confronted him with that gloomy suspicion characteristic of detectives.

"Yes?"

One of the men, a thin, hawk-eyed fellow, flipped back his coat lapel to disclose the momentary gleam of a shield.

"Headquarters," he said briefly. "This is Mr. Klein's apartment, isn't it?"

The other man, a bull-necked person with a very red nose, glanced meaningly at the card on the door, as though challenging denial.

"This is his apartment," said Dean. "He is away on his holidays just now. I'm living here until he comes back."

"What's *your* name?"

"Dean. I work on *The Sun,* with Klein."

The detective's manner altered perceptibly. "Oh, I see. You're a newspaper man, too, eh? Well, we're lookin' for a pal of Klein's, and we had an idea he might have come here."

"There's no one here but myself," answered Dean blankly. "I just came in a few minutes ago."

"Didn't see any one hangin' around, did you?"

"You're welcome to take a look through the apartment if you want to."

"Oh, I don't know as it's necessary," growled the hawk-eyed man, but his keen gaze swept every detail of the room visible over Dean's shoulder.

"I'd just as soon you would, if you think there's any chance of his being around."

The detective came in. The bull-necked man stood in the middle of the room, peering about with portentous gravity, but the hawk-eyed fellow went swiftly into the bedroom and bathroom, snapping on the lights as he went.

Dean stifled a gasp. Directly across the chesterfield lay Craig's hat and coat.

He waited tensely, while the detective came back into the living-room. He glanced at the hat and coat, but evidently presumed that they belonged to Dean, for he said nothing about them.

"Not that we think you're *hiding* him," he said apologetically, "but there's just a chance he may have got in here before you came home."

Then he looked at the window.

Dean's fingers were clenched. The detective walked swiftly over and brushed the curtains aside. But the fact that the window catch was on reassured him, and, after a moment of agonizing suspense, Dean saw him step back.

"Not around, Joe," he remarked to his companion. Then he turned to Dean. "Thanks for lettin' us look around. We just had an idea he might have come here."

"Who is he and what does he look like?"

"Name's Scott Craig. Slim, tall, fair guy with blue eyes. If he comes prowlin' around, give us a call."

"All right," said Dean, going with them to the door.

"Much obliged."

"Good night."

"'Night."

THE detectives vanished down the hall. Dean closed the door and listened to their receding footsteps as they descended the stairs. Not until he heard the street door close did he go back into the room. He went over to the window and opened it.

There was no sign of the fugitive. He called softly: "They're gone."

A rustle from the darkness above, and he looked up to see a figure disengage itself from the window ledge overhead. A precarious steel ladder, in use as an emergency fire-escape, dangled down the side of the building, from window to window, and Craig had made use of it to escape his pursuers. The fugitive swung himself over the ledge and scrambled through the window. He was shivering, his teeth chattered, his hands were blue with cold and stained with rust from the ladder.

"That was close," he said. "The police?"

Dean nodded. "A couple of detectives. They just poked around. I told them you hadn't been here. You're safe enough now, I guess."

"It was mighty good of you."

"Well," said Dean, embarrassed, "for a minute or two I didn't know just what to do. But, somehow, there's something about giving a chap up to the police—I couldn't see it."

"It was decent."

"I suppose now I'm what you'd call an accessory after the fact," laughed the reporter shortly. "Well, I'm in with you now, so I may as well stick."

"You mean you'll help me?"

"I won't give you up."

"I may do that myself. But I want to see Margaret first."

"Oh, yes. She's—the girl?"

"Yes, the girl."

"You want her to come here?"

"I can't very well go to her. I'd be caught."

Dean's fingers drummed on the table-top.

"You mean, you want me to tell her where you are and have her meet you here?"

"It's a lot to ask."

"Well, I'm in it now," said the reporter, "so I guess I might as well stay with the ship, eh? And, maybe, we'll be able to find out who really *did* kill the old man. That would clear you, and it would be a whale of a story for me." His eyes sparkled at the thought; for a while he had been forgetting that he was a newspaper man. "A whale of a story! All right, Craig, I'm with you. I'll help you as far as I can."

"I don't want you to do this without realizing what it means. I'm a fugitive, you know, and you're breaking the law by helping me at all."

"I've broken it already. Shake."

They shook hands.

"I'll try to get word to your girl in the morning," said Dean.

And with that they went to bed. Craig was very tired, and he fell asleep on his cot in a few minutes, but Dean lay awake for more than an hour before he finally passed into a fitful slumber. From the prosaic routine of sermons and obituaries he had been suddenly plunged into the heart of a smashing front-page story. It seemed ironic that it should have happened to him in the course of his private existence instead of coming in the line of his duties as a reporter for *The Sun.*

IN THE morning they had breakfast, which Dean had had sent up from the corner restaurant.

"The best plan," he said to Craig, as they smoked cigarets over their coffee, "is to get the girl up here so you can have a talk with her. You can find out exactly how things stand then, and if you think it would be better to stay hidden for a day or so longer, you can do so."

"It'll be hard for her to come up here. The police will be watching her fairly closely."

"I'll look after that. I can get in touch with her by telephone and meet her somewhere."

"Take care she isn't shadowed."

"I've been thinking of that," admitted Dean. "If it's too risky, I won't bring her up. But I'll do my best."

After breakfast he left the apartment, and, seeking out a nearby pay-station, put in a call to the shop of the slain pawnbroker. A gruff voice answered:

"Yes?"

"Is Miss Ellery there?"

"Who wants to know?"

"This is her cousin calling. I want to inquire about the funeral arrangements."

"Just a minute."

After a brief wait he heard a girl's voice, low and pleasant: "Who is calling, please?"

Dean spoke swiftly, tensely:

"This is a friend of Mr. Craig speaking. Be careful in your replies. Are the police there?"

"Yes." The voice was unchanged.

"He wants to see you. Do you think you can make it?"

"Well," she answered guardedly, "that's hard to say."

"If you can, be in front of the church on St. Denis Street, just off St. Catherine, at noon sharp. Be on the lookout for a yellow taxi. I will draw close to the curb, and if you signal for the cab I'll have the chauffeur pull up. Get right in, and I'll take you to Mr. Craig. He is very anxious to see you, but we realize the police are likely to be expecting that he will try to get in touch with you."

"I'll do my best."

"At noon sharp. In front of the church."

"I understand."

"Now tell me something about the funeral arrangements. Anything—in case some one is listening."

"The arrangements haven't been decided yet. They are holding the inquest to-morrow."

"I see. Do your best to get out without being followed. I'll be expecting you."

He said good-by and hung up the receiver. He then went out and bought a copy of *The Sun.* It contained little that he did not already know. The murder case was "played up" on the front page, and Craig's guilt seemed taken for granted. His capture was expected hourly. Comparison of his finger-prints with finger-prints found in the dust beside the body, it was expected, would seal his fate. Mention was made of a glove that had been found in the pawnbroker's office, another clue that the police believed would definitely link the missing lover with the crime.

"Looks bad," muttered Dean to himself. "I wonder if he has been lying to me, after all?"

WHEN it was near noon he hailed a yellow taxi and ordered the chauffeur to cruise about in the vicinity of the church he had mentioned. As the first strokes of the noon bell sounded, he saw a girl walking quickly up from St. Catherine Street, anxiously scanning the passing cars.

"Pull up to the curb," he ordered.

The car drew up before the church, and Dean opened the door. The girl was abreast of the taxi; she cast him a quick, frightened look.

"Miss Ellery," he called softly.

A moment of hesitation, and she stepped into the car. The door slammed.

"Straight ahead," Dean ordered the chauffeur. "Keep moving."

The car drew away from the curb and sped up St. Denis Street.

"I've been followed," said the girl quietly. "Two men."

Dean glanced back.

He saw a tall man in an overcoat hastily scrambling into a taxi about half a block behind. In this figure there was something reminiscent of the hawk-eyed detective who had visited the apartment the night before, but the man got into the car so quickly that Dean could not be sure. At the same moment another taxi shot out from the curb, some distance farther back.

"We're being followed," Dean said, leaning forward and speaking to the driver. "Go east on Sherbrooke and try to shake any cars that stick to us. There's a five spot in it for you."

"What's the big idea?" growled the driver suspiciously. "Hold-up or somethin'?"

Dean turned back his coat lapel to display his badge. Its silvery glitter reassured the driver, and he nodded curtly. "Sorry, sir," he growled, and the car fairly leaped ahead.

The other taxis were racing behind. At the corner of St. Denis and Sherbrooke the traffic signal was fortunately with them, and they wheeled into the noonday stream. Dean glanced behind and saw that their pursuers had been forced to slow down in order to cut in. At the next corner they sped north, then dodged east again, rounded a block, and raced up the slippery road. Dean glanced back in time to see that at least one of the other cars had not been shaken off. It skidded around the corner, righted itself, then picked up and roared in pursuit.

"I'll get rid of *that* bird," growled the driver, his professional pride injured.

He bore down on the wheel, and the taxi rounded a sharp corner on two wheels, entering a narrow alley. So sharp had been the turn that the girl gave a little scream, and she was thrown against Dean. The car rocked and bumped its way to the next cross street, then cut sharply to the left and whizzed down a wide avenue. Another turn at the next block, and the driver glanced back.

"Any sign of 'em now?"

"Not in sight."

"That did the trick. Where to?"

"Back to St. Denis. I'll tell you where to let us off."

When they reached St. Denis Street again Dean bade the driver stop while they were still a block away from the apartment house. If the pursuers had by any chance obtained their driver's number, they might persuade him to reveal the destination. He was taking no chances. He helped the girl out of the car, paid the fare, gave the man the promised five dollars, and dismissed him. Not until the taxi was out of sight did he escort the girl toward the house.

CHAPTER IV

THE INTRUDER

IF HE had been conscious of any wavering doubts as to Craig's innocence, Dean admitted to himself that the girl had effectually dispelled them during her interview with the fugitive. Her story of the discovery of the old man's body had such an implicit ring of truth, and coincided with Craig's account in such minute detail, that the reporter could not do otherwise than believe it.

"Do you think, though," he said, "that it was wise for Craig to go into hiding?"

"I don't know," said the girl, twisting her gloves in nervous fingers as she sat wearily in one of the deep chairs in the apartment. "I know they haven't another thought but that he is guilty. If he had not gone away, he would be in jail now."

"What beats me," declared Craig gloomily, "is why they haven't run across some clues that would give them a trace to the real murderer?"

"There isn't a thing. Nothing but the glove."

Craig glanced up, interested.

"What glove?"

"Do you remember seeing a glove beside—beside him?"

The young man reflected for a moment. "Seems to me that I do. Why, that should give them something to work on."

"It should. But there was only the one glove, and they're convinced that you have the mate to it. They aren't looking for it anywhere else."

"What size was it?" asked Dean.

"A nine," the girl answered.

"And what size do you wear?" he asked Craig.

"Nine."

There was silence.

"It won't prove anything," remarked the reporter finally, "but it doesn't do you any good, that's a fact."

Craig plunged his hands desperately into his coat pockets. "But who *could* have done it? What was the motive?" He turned to the girl. "Was he robbed?"

She shook her head. "His cashbox was in the drawer of his desk. It hadn't been touched. There wasn't anything missing."

"Any enemies?"

"Not many people liked him," she said painfully, "but he hadn't any out-and-out enemies that I know of."

"When he sent you out on that errand," suggested Dean, "was any one coming to see him?"

"He didn't say. Sometimes men from the neighborhood called to see him on business at night."

"For instance——?"

"Once in a while that fellow Bloom."

Craig's eyes blazed with fury. "*That's* who did it!" he declared. "The little beast who was always hanging around you. The fellow I smacked yesterday afternoon."

"Tell me about it," suggested Dean.

Craig told him of his encounter with the pimply-faced youth in the pawnshop the previous day. "I wouldn't put it past him for a minute to commit murder," he said. "He's a cheap pool-room tout, and he hangs around with the Goulet gang a lot. They're a bad outfit."

"Goulet has been up to see my father a few times," said the girl. "Not very often. I don't know what his business was."

"This chap Bloom," intervened Dean—"did the police question him?"

The girl nodded. "When they found out about the row in the shop yesterday they called him in and talked to him. But he had been playing pool all evening. Every lad in the neighborhood was there to prove it."

"I guess that lets him out, then," grumbled Craig. "Air-tight alibi, I suppose."

"He hadn't been out of the poolroom between eight o'clock and eleven. It couldn't have been him."

"Well, I'll bet he's tickled pink to think they're trying to hang the murder on me."

"WHAT do you think we'd better do?" asked Dean of the girl.

"I don't know. Now that I've lied and told them I didn't see Scott around the place last night, they won't believe me if I tell them the truth."

"And," the reporter reminded her, "the inquest is to-morrow."

She looked startled. "They will question me again."

"Perjury!" snapped Craig, his tone bitter.

"Oh, I don't want to tell any more lies, Scott, even to protect you. I know you're innocent. I got you into this. I'm to blame. If only I hadn't agreed to meet you last night! If only I hadn't made you go away after we found the—the body! Everything I've done has been wrong! " She broke down and sobbed quietly.

Craig went over to her and put his arms about her. "Never mind, hon," he soothed. "I'm going to go down right away and give myself up. You and I know I'm innocent, whatever they may think. I can face it through."

But Dean shook his head.

"You're in pretty deep as it is. I don't know that it wouldn't be wiser to wait a while. Until to-morrow, perhaps. Give them a chance to work on the case a little more, and perhaps they'll run across something that will put them on an entirely different trail. If you give yourself up now, you are bringing Miss Ellery and me into it for protecting you, remember. Wait another day, at any rate."

Craig patted the girl's hand mechanically.

"I guess you're right," he admitted reluctantly. "We're all in this together."

"If nothing turns up before the inquest, you may as well go to the police and tell your story. If you don't, Miss Ellery will either have to commit perjury or admit that you were in the place last night."

And that was the decision arising from the interview. Craig and the girl kissed each other good-by, and Dean brought her to the apartment house door.

"I'd better take a look around," he suggested, before they went out on the street. "I'll call a taxi. Then, if it's safe for you to come out, I'll nod to you. They may have this place shadowed."

She remained inside the doorway while he went down the steps. There was no one in sight but a janitor shoveling snow from a walk across the street and a newsboy calling the afternoon papers. A roving taxi came in sight, and Dean hailed it. As the car drew up to the curb, he looked back toward the glass-plated doors and nodded sharply. The girl emerged, he helped her into the car, the taxi plunged forward.

Dean looked around after she had gone. No one had observed her departure save the newsboy. Dean congratulated himself that he had managed the whole affair very smartly.

"Here, boy!" He bought a paper and returned to the apartment.

AT THE office that night, Dean's preoccupation attracted the notice of Winters, who observed to the assistant city editor that "the cub is getting fed up," and opined that the monotony of obituaries was doubtless getting on his nerves. The truth of the matter was that Dean was feeling for the first time the keen elation that possesses a newspaper man on the scent of a good story, and he was turning over in his mind the ways and means whereby, if Craig should decide to give himself up, the surrender could be timed to give *The Sun* an exclusive yarn. Also he was busy with reflections on his own connection with the case and the consequences to himself when it became known that he had sheltered the fugitive. These reflections were not wholly comfortable.

He rushed through his work as quickly as possible and left the office a good hour before his usual quitting time, a circumstance that caused Winters to nod meaningly. Before he left, however, Dean had opportunity for a few minutes' talk with Jenkins, who told him that there had been no new developments in the case.

"They're keeping an eye on the girl," said the police reporter. "She knows where Craig is hiding. This afternoon she slipped out for a while and put across a fast one on the bulls when they tried to follow her. I'm thinking she's not such an innocent as they've figured her. She ducked into the cab and run them ragged till she shook them. She landed back home in a couple of hours, but they couldn't find out where she'd been. The dicks took a fine call-down for letting her out of sight, but all they could say was they never figured she'd be so smart. They've just been letting things ride, y'see, hoping she'd slip up and they'd be able to find where Craig is hiding."

"I guess they'll get him, all right."

"He'll be tripped up. You seem mighty interested in this, kid. How come?"

"Nothing in particular. Just because you were the first to tell me about it, I guess. And then, this Craig being a friend of Klein's——"

"Yeah. A chap never knows what his friends are up to these days."

"That's true."

There was nothing further to be learned from Jenkins, who could be presumed to have the latest details at his finger-tips, so when Dean returned to the apartment that night he had to confess to the waiting Craig that the news was not encouraging.

"They've got it set in their minds that you're the man they want," he told the fugitive. "They're not trying to find any one else."

"I guess there's nothing else for it," muttered Craig gloomily. "I might as well give myself up and fight it out."

The strain of the last twenty-four hours was already telling on him. His eyes were haggard and he seemed to have given up all hope. Dean tried to cheer him up.

"We never know what'll happen between now and next day. Have a good sleep and forget it."

"That's easy enough to say."

However, excellent though the advice might have been, Dean found it impossible to follow it himself. As he lay in bed that night, he kept reviewing the sequence of events that had involved him in this affair, and the more he considered it the more he saw that his own conduct would be difficult of reasonable explanation. He recollected traditional tales and fables current in *The Sun* office concerning the policy of the Boss toward employees who had been so careless as to get themselves into the headlines of their own paper. Instant dismissal was the penalty for being even remotely involved in scandal or police court matters, unless in a purely official capacity.

"Kindly Cub Canned, Craig Case Consequence," he thought, would be an apt headline, although he well knew that *The Sun* would not deign to notice his passing by so much as a line of type. He sighed. Well, at least, he would do his best to give them a beat on the surrender of the suspect.

He fell into a restless slumber from which he awakened with a start.

The room was in pitch darkness. He did not know how long he had slept, but it could not have been more than an hour. At first he was at a loss to know what had awakened him, but then, as he lay there listening, he heard a slight sound from the other room.

Dean sat up in bed. The sound was repeated. It came from the direction of the living-room window At first he thought it might be but the slash of driving sleet against the pane, but when he heard the noise again he knew it was too mechanical and too abrupt for that. He heard a creak, then a rattle.

He slipped quietly out of bed and made his way over to the door.

The window was gray against the surrounding darkness, but at the base the rectangle was broken by a gloomy shadow. Even as he watched he saw the shadow rise higher, revealing the head and shoulders of a man, and at the same instant the window was raised open.

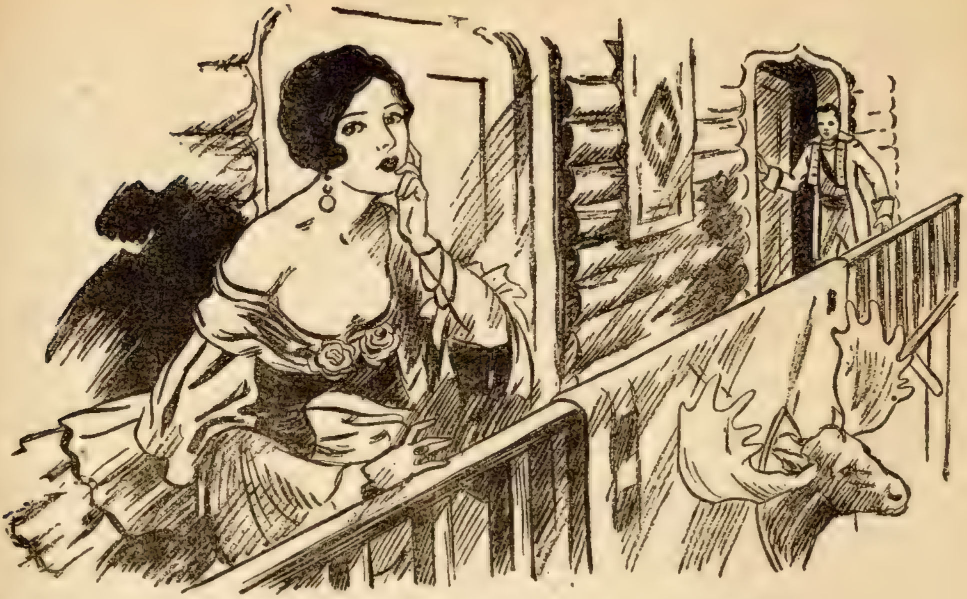
Dean went quietly over to the bureau. Klein had once showed him a revolver that he kept in the upper drawer, and he groped for it. But the weapon somehow evaded his grasp; he pulled the drawer out a little farther, it stuck, then gave way suddenly and came out, falling to the floor with a crash.

There was no use attempting to capture the intruder by surprise after that. Dean sprang for the electric light switch, then hesitated and thought better of it. The other man would probably be armed, and in the lighted room the reporter realized that he would be an admirable target. He raced through the doorway and over to the window just in time to see the shadow disappear.

The window was half open, and he leaned out, hoping to grapple with his mysterious visitor. His hand brushed the fellow's shoulder. The man had made his way up to the window by the fire-escape ladder, and now he was desperately attempting to scramble back down to the ground.

The steel ladder clattered against the wall. As Dean leaned out the window he saw the dark figure sway, grasp frantically at the rung above, then topple sideways. There was a muffled shout—and the fellow pitched downward toward the snow-covered court below.

This story will be concluded in the May, 1928, issue of Mystery Stories



That last melancholy interview proved to be fruitless.

Famous Unsolved Mysteries

A SERIES.

By ALVIN F. HARLOW

6. The Hunting Lodge at Mayerling

The life—and death—of Rudolph, comely and intelligent son of Franz Joseph, furnished perhaps the most picturesque and startling series of events that touched closely the colorful life of the old Austrian emperor.

CERTAINLY a curse must have rested upon the Hapsburgs, the ill-fated royal family of Austria-Hungary. The seventy-year reign of the old Emperor Francis Joseph, who died during the Great War, was studded thickly with family tragedies, including the slaying of his Empress by an anarchist in Switzerland—a strange, inexplicable crime. The assassination of his nephew, Francis Ferdinand, then the Crown Prince, was the event that precipitated the

World War. And how did Francis Ferdinand become the Crown Prince? The answer to that question constitutes our story; but there is a mystery connected with it, as there is with so many of the events in the Hapsburg family during several centuries past.

FORTY years ago there was a direct heir to the throne—the Emperor Francis Joseph's only son, Rudolph, then thirty years of age. Rudolph was a handsome, brilliant man, with a fine figure and great personal charm. He had probably derived some of his comeliness from his mother, the Empress Elizabeth, who was noted for her beauty. He also had great mental gifts. He was a good linguist and much interested in economics, nature study, and other subjects. He wrote two clever books of travel, and promoted the publication of a sort of encyclopedia of the Empire, which he partly edited.

Lieutenant-General Latour, a prominent official of the Austrian court, who had been the Prince's instructor in his youth, once said: "I never met a more talented man than the Archduke Rudolph. If only he'd had as much character as talent! Everything came so easily to him that he began to think he was omnipotence personified; and the flattering parasites who hung around him deliberately did everything they could to make him think that perilous notion an irrefutable fact. He thus lost his moral balance, left serious work alone, and ultimately devoted himself to that unceasing round of pleasure to which he ingloriously succumbed."

All this resulted from the fact that, being pampered in his youth, Rudolph had shown some frolicsome traits and gotten into scrapes which disgusted the Emperor, who was a rigid and stodgy disciplinarian. His mother protected him, got him out of trouble, and made him more harum-scarum than ever. Furthermore, it became evident in youth that Rudolph was not cut out for an army career and had no sympathy with military life—which was nothing short of heresy for a Hapsburg. He was likewise disgusted with the strict etiquette, tinsel, and formality of court life, which seemed to him like a survival from the Middle Ages.

Such ideas were abhorrent to the Emperor, who could not conceive of their being held by anybody save a dangerous radical or a fool. Therefore the monarch never took his son seriously, never assigned him any duties or responsibilities, never consulted with him or gave him advice and encouragement.

RUDOLPH, like other royal personages of the past, had no choice in the matter of his marriage. The bride selected for him was Stephanie, daughter of King Leopold of Belgium. This idea was hatched by the diplomats of the two countries, and the Emperor accepted it eagerly because Stephanie was the daughter of a king, and closely related to nearly all the royalty of Europe. The Empress did not favor the match. She hated King Leopold, and said: "Nothing good can come out of Belgium." Naturally, her attitude did not make her son any more enthusiastic toward the bride who was not of his own choosing.

There was another person who was bitterly disappointed by the wedding arrangement. This was Rudolph's cousin, Marie Louise Elizabeth, daughter of the Archduke Ludwig of Bavaria, who had long been greatly infatuated with him and had set all sorts of snares to catch him. But this lady was not regarded as a sufficiently good catch, and, through the efforts of the Empress, she was married to Count George Larisch, a cavalry officer.

Thereafter the Countess Larisch, disappointed, furiously jealous, bitter over the dissipation of her dream, thought of nothing but interfering in the domestic affairs of the Crown Prince. When she found that his marriage was far from being a happy one—that Rudolph was bored and irritated and seeking pleasure elsewhere—she studied hard to find means of estranging the royal pair still more.

At a great Polish ball given at the Larisch home in Vienna at Shrovetide, 1887, the jealous schemer introduced Rudolph to the Baroness Marie Vetsera, daughter of a Hungarian noble and a radiant beauty then aged only nineteen. Her charm of face, figure, and manner were simply dazzling to the Archduke, and he fell violently in love with her.

The Countess Larisch did all she could to help the affair along, and it was not long before the Princess Stephanie heard of it. In fact, Rudolph seems to have taken little pains to conceal it from her. In the summer of that year Queen Victoria's jubilee took place, celebrating the fiftieth year of her reign over England, and the Crown Prince and Princess were designated to attend the ceremonies as representatives of the royal house of Austria. But at the last moment Stephanie positively refused to go. She had learned that Marie Vetsera was visiting her sister in England, and suspected that the Baroness had timed her visit so that she might have an opportunity to see Rudolph there. Entreaties, arguments, and threats had no effect on Stephanie—she positively would not go; and Rudolph, white with rage, departed for England alone. Queen Victoria regarded Stephanie's action as an insult.

Rudolph had two or three stolen interviews with Marie in England, and she urged him to free himself from Stephanie. After this incident the Crown Prince and his wife were hopelessly divided. They scarcely even spoke to each other again.

BUT a separation, against the will of the Emperor and the Court party, was easier talked about than accomplished. Rudolph let more than a year pass before he dared to make any move in the matter. Meanwhile, his sweetheart was undoubtedly urging it with all of her power. She yearned to sit on the throne of the Empire, and her ambition was ruthless in its intensity. Finally Rudolph, without mentioning his purpose to his father or any one else about the court, applied to Pope Leo XIII, asking to have his marriage dissolved.

The Pope doubtless guessed the state of affairs at once. Before replying to Rudolph, he laid the matter before Francis Joseph. Of course the Emperor was overwhelmed with grief and rage. He summoned Rudolph to his presence, and in a furious interview told him with brutal candor what a low opinion he had of him; and he added that on no consideration would such an insane idea as the annulment of his marriage be sanctioned. He also ordered the Archduke to cease seeing Marie Vetsera and to sever all acquaintance with her forever. So excited was the Emperor by the quarrel that after Rudolph had left him he fell in a fainting fit.

That interview took place during the last week in January, 1889. On the afternoon of the 30th of January sudden and terrible rumors swept through the Court and began to trickle out into the streets of Vienna. The Archduke Rudolph, the heir to the throne, had been found dead that morning at a hunting lodge or small château located in the forest of Mayerling, a royal game preserve about eighteen miles distant from the capital.

The first report was that his death was the result of a hunting accident: "caught the hammer of his gun in a bush"—"the gamekeeper was cleaning a gun"—"another man thought he saw a deer and fired at it"—these were a few of the rumors that tried to establish themselves; but another and uglier one was arising, and soon it swept the others before it. By the next day it was being whispered about Vienna that the beautiful Baroness Marie Vetsera also lay dead in the hunting lodge at Mayerling.

OF COURSE a thousand wild stories were afloat, but the seemingly logical explanation that at once occurred to the public mind was that the two lovers, grief-stricken at the thought that they could never be united, had made a death pact and had gone out to the castle in the forest to spend a few last hours together before they passed into eternity.

But this was immediately combatted by other rumors, apparently backed up by proof. Countess Larisch reported that her maid had said to her: "Some people say that the Crown Prince was shot by a gamekeeper; others insist that His Royal Highness was hit on the head with a chair by the Duke of Braganza; again it is reported that the Baroness Marie forced her way into the presence of the Crown Prince and wounded him because he wished to break off the affair between them. Indeed, they say also that she afterward shot herself in the forest of Mayerling, where her body was discovered."

PROBABLY no occurrence in history has been the subject of so many diametrically opposed stories told by people who, if they did not actually see these two killed, were at least in close touch with the situation—stories always supported by seeming proof and the testimony of reputable persons. A happening like this serves to reveal how many dark, muddy, slimy currents and cross-currents are moving to and fro and writhing about each other under the surface of the life of many an imperial court. Some of the stories told about the mystery of Mayerling were doubtless deliberate lies, told for self-interest or to protect certain high reputations; others, one cannot doubt, represent honest beliefs, founded on mere surmises, gossip, and false report. Among them all there is, somewhere, the truth. But whatever that truth may be, no one save possibly half a dozen persons has ever known or will ever know it in its entirety.

The rumor of a suicide pact seems disproven by the fact, which is clearly established, that Rudolph and Marie did not go to Mayerling together, and that he did not expect to see her there. He had gone to the lodge with three or four boon companions. Prince Philip of Coburg, Count Hoyos, and the Duke of Braganza have been mentioned as having been in the party. They did not hunt on the 29th—the day preceding the night of the tragedy—and Rudolph's friends testify that he was considerably disconcerted when Marie appeared at the lodge that afternoon. They went to an upper room that evening for an interview, which was to be the last of their lives. Meanwhile, the other men were having a jolly evening of it with wine and cards downstairs—after which they probably slept pretty soundly. It is easy to understand why, if there were any shots fired upstairs during the night, these guests did not hear them; but whether any of the servants heard them—and if not, why they did not—is harder to explain.

Countess Larisch, in her memoirs, upholds the suicide theory. She pictures a frightful mutilation by a heavy pistol—the top of the Archduke's head almost shot off, and one side of Marie's beautiful face badly shattered, so that one eye was fallen from its socket. The Countess says that Dr. Weiderhofer, one of the physicians hastily summoned from Vienna, told her this, and described how he placed the eye back in its socket and put a bandage about the face and head to hold it all in position.

Marie's mother received orders to leave Austria at once for Venice, and to give out the report that Marie had died in Vienna. Countess Larisch says that Marie's two uncles were ordered to hasten to Mayerling and bring their niece's body, fully dressed and sitting up in a carriage as if she were alive, to Vienna, in order to prevent its being known that she had been slain at the lodge. While they were propping her body up in the carriage for this dreadful mummery the bandage about her face came loose, and—but some of the details of that hideous ride may well be spared. They reached the walled burying-ground of the Cistercian abbey of Heiligenkreuz, in Vienna, late at night; and there, in a hastily made grave, the monks buried the broken body of the once famous beauty by the flickering light of a candle. At five o'clock next morning Madame Vetsera left for Venice, never to return.

How foolish were these attempts at suppression by the Emperor and the police! The news of Marie's death at the lodge was already out and nothing could stop it. The truth that could not be learned by the public was how and why she had died.

To be sure, it is possible that, although Rudolph had not intended self-destruction when he went to Mayerling, his sweetheart may so have worked upon his emotions that evening as to induce him to agree to it. Countess Larisch, in proof of this theory, says that three weeks after the tragedy she received the following letter from Marie Vetsera which, upon careful examination, she found had been opened and resealed on its way to her:

> DEAR MARIE:
>
> Forgive me for all the trouble I have caused. I thank you so much for everything you have done for me. If life becomes too hard for you, and I fear it will after what we have done, follow us. It is the best thing you can do.
>
> Your MARIE.

If this letter, supposedly written during that last evening of the Baroness' life in the upper room at the lodge, is authentic, then the affair could have been nothing else than a double suicide. General Latour always believed, or professed to believe, this theory. So did Dr. Schmalzhofer, who was usually pretty well informed as to what went on in the royal family. The Doctor was one of several who asserted that Rudolph did not commit suicide during the night, but early on the following morning. He said that at dawn when Loschek, the valet, entered the room, the Prince had just raised the pistol to kill himself; that Loschek grappled with him to prevent his carrying out his intention; and that in the desperate struggle which ensued the Prince received certain wounds on the top of the head which afterward created much discussion and diverse opinion. Frau Schratt, confidante of the Emperor in his later years, gave the same version of the scene.

A member of Rudolph's suite, whose name is not given, wrote an unsigned book several years afterward, dealing with the life and death of the Archduke. He says he was not in the lodge when the bodies were discovered, but reached there shortly afterward. He did not see the bodies until the doctors had examined them and laid them out, ready to be taken to Vienna. In his book there is a photograph, undoubtedly authentic, of the Prince's body as it lay in the room where he was slain. A cover is drawn close up to the chin, and the top of the head is covered, down to the eyebrows, with a bandage. The writer admits that this is all he saw. Marie Vetsera's body he saw across the room, and in a somewhat dim light. He does not mention any mutilation, but he saw only one side of the face, and Countess Larisch says that the uninjured side showed no trace of the fearful mutilation on the other.

This anonymous writer builds up a theory—which, by the way, was believed in many of the courts of Europe, and has been mentioned in more than one historical work since then—that Rudolph did not commit suicide, but was assassinated by persons in the employ of Germany!

THIS was the situation at the time: The old Emperor William of Germany died in March, 1888. His son, Frederick III, was a dying man when he came to the throne. Frederick reigned only from March until June, and was ill all the time. His son, William, the late Kaiser, was already in the saddle, and was so anxious for the supreme power that he was straining at the leash. Already he was beginning his intrigues with the idea of making himself master of all Europe. More than once it has been asserted that he was plotting to get Francis Joseph and his son Rudolph out of the way, believing that he could then make himself master of Austria. The anonymous writer just mentioned says that William feared Rudolph more than his father, believing that the son was shrewder and even the more forceful man.

This writer gives much evidence to prove the intrigue. He says that Rudolph ran more and more deeply in debt, and that throughout 1888 his notes were methodically bought up by some one in Berlin, believed to be an agent of the Kaiser. Meanwhile the writer heard many reports, coming through his friends, Count Wolfram and Isidore Koinoff, an Austrian Pole, of plotting in Germany. He says that Countess Larisch, because of her German connections, was used as a tool by the plotters, and was, in effect, "an unconscious spy" for Germany. Count Wolfram told of being in the Chancellery in Berlin and eavesdropping on a conversation in the next room, in which he heard Count Bismarck, the Chancellor, declare that he would not be a party to murder—and Wolfram asserts that it was of Rudolph of Austria that they were talking. It will be remembered that the Kaiser threw Bismarck out of office soon after he came to the throne.

This anonymous writer then goes on to say that it has been reported that Marie Vetsera died of poison, but that this is false. He declares that he has been informed on good authority that she was shot through the heart, the bullet entering her back, while Rudolph was shot through the temple. It was believed that the assassin, concealed outside the building, stealthily opened a window and shot the Prince, and, to prevent the crime's being immediately discovered, was compelled to shoot Marie also.

ANOTHER amazing theory—if anything could be more amazing than the tragedy itself—is that of Count Roger de Resseguier, whose father held a high position at court. In his book of recollections of Francis Joseph and his times, Resseguier speaks of the detectives whom Princess Stephanie and some of the Baldazzis (Madame Vetsera's family) had engaged to watch Rudolph and Marie. Chief among the Baldazzi kinsmen in pushing the espionage was Baron Baldazzi, a cousin of Madame Vetsera, one of a prominent family of Levantine bankers, and a former fiancé of Marie's. The Baron was both jealous and incensed at what he considered a disgrace to his house. Resseguier says that on the day preceding the tragedy there was a conference between Princess Stephanie, Madame Vetsera, and Baldazzi. They had just received a report from a detective named Schaefer, who told them that Marie had followed Rudolph to Mayerling. The writer thinks it hardly probable that the two women told Baldazzi to wreak vengeance on the couple—but he believes that he decided to do it on his own account.

Carrying a Remington rifle, the Baron is said to have taken a train out of Vienna to a station in the country, where he got off and walked through the forest toward Mayerling. Resseguier asserts that he was seen on the way by two monks. He hid in the forest until after dark, and then came up to the rear of the château. There was a high bank there, from which he could look into a second-story window. There he saw the Prince and Marie in each other's arms—and, raising his rifle, he sent a single deadly bullet through both their hearts!

But his rage was not yet appeased. The other male guests in the lodge were lying in a drunken stupor; and, hurling his gun from him (Resseguier says it was found in a ditch by servants next morning), Baldazzi either climbed through the window or rushed in by a door, seized a heavy bottle, and furiously battered it to pieces upon the heads of the dead lovers. Splinters of the glass were found driven into their brains.

Such is Resseguier's story; and the fact that it, like most of the others, undertakes to account for terrible wounds said to have been found on the top of the Archduke's head, seems an additional proof that the wounds must have been there.

Still another explanation of these injuries appears in a theory, or, rather, set of theories, held by some highly reputable persons in Austria, among them Baron Margutti, a high official of the government, who wrote a sketch of the life of Francis Joseph not many years ago. He states that the real truth about the Baroness Vetsera is that she died of poison; that he had this from three doctors who examined her body, and that all other stories of what they found or what they said are either fabrications or distorted rumors or, in some cases, are possibly based on a false statement which some doctor had been ordered to make to the public.

Why did not both Marie and Rudolph drink of the same cup? The fact, which seems to be clearly established, that the Prince did not die from poison, would appear to prove that there was no suicide agreement. As some persons fancy the scene, Marie followed him to the lodge, with suicide in mind if he could give her no hope that their marriage might at some time be consummated. When that last melancholy interview had proven fruitless, she drew forth the vial of poison which she had brought with her and swallowed it. The Archduke, so the theory then continues, driven to a frenzy of despair by her agonizing death, decided to end his own earthly troubles, and so put his pistol to his own brain.

MARGUTTI says that there can be no doubt that Marie committed suicide—but not the Archduke! He says that the Empress Elizabeth always maintained that her son had been murdered. This is vouched for by General Middleton, an English officer stationed in Vienna and a close confidant of the royal family—also by others who were in a position to know. Furthermore, the Empress told those nearest to her that *the Crown Prince had fallen a victim to one of his love affairs, but not the one with Marie Vetsera!*

"Suicide!" growled Middleton, in speaking of the affair to Margutti. "Why, Rudolph hadn't the courage that it takes to commit suicide!"

These were some of the things that were whispered about as time went on: firstly, that Rudolph had already begun another flirtation, this time with the wife of the head gamekeeper at Mayerling, who was considered a very piquant beauty. It may well be probable that he had begun to tire just a little of the Baroness Marie and her continual teasing at him to divorce his wife and gratify her—Marie's—ambition. Secondly, say Middleton and others, the Prince was not even killed inside the lodge. An under-gamekeeper at Mayerling told of finding the body lying in the snow at dawn of that gloomy January morning, almost in front of the head gamekeeper's cottage, with the skull battered in. The gamekeeper had disappeared. Whether he was ever found, whether there was ever any clue as to what had become of him, these are things that are likewise sealed up in the great book of mystery.

Count Hoyos, who was a guest at the hunting lodge on the night of the tragedy, is said to have written to a near relative in Hungary, confirming the report that the body of the Prince had been found in the snow near the gamekeeper's cottage. He said that the gamekeeper was an intensely jealous man and would not endure the thought of his wife's being sought by a nobleman. His pride and jealousy were more powerful than his reverence for royalty. On the fatal night, he had found the Archduke courting his wife, killed him, and tossed his body out into the road.

Baron Margutti says that there were several witnesses to the carrying of Rudolph's corpse from the trampled roadway into the hunting lodge. In spite of the fact that the body of the Baroness had lain inside the château for several hours, Margutti says: "It would appear more than questionable whether the Crown Prince ever knew of Marie Vetsera's suicide." He and others reconstruct the happenings of the last day or two of this unfortunate couple's lives as follows:

AFTER hearing his father's emphatic refusal to permit his divorce, the Crown Prince regarded the affair as all over. Perhaps, if his cynical and changeable nature were already tiring of Marie, he even felt a little relief to know that he now had a good excuse for stopping her importunities. He probably laid the facts frankly before her, and thought he would be doing her a kindness by leaving her for a while. Hence his going to the rustic retreat at Mayerling. The choice of this particular spot was doubtless influenced by his growing preference for the gamekeeper's wife. Here would be an opportunity to divert his mind from the annoying affair which had been pestering him for so long past.

"That Marie Vetsera should hurry to Mayerling after the Prince for a last meeting," says Margutti, "must have been very vexatious to him."

After the interview, Margutti surmises that Rudolph did not care to remain longer and listen to Marie's complaints, but sauntered out and down the road to the gamekeeper's cottage. The desperate woman whom he had left behind him, hurled into the very pit of despair by the failure of her cherished hope of sitting on the Imperial throne, and—let us be generous to her—perhaps also miserable because of her wasted love, saw nothing further to live for, and drank the poison which she had brought with her.

Meanwhile—so runs Margutti's theory, built partly on evidence, partly on gossip, partly on surmise—Rudolph hastened to the cottage of his new flame, the gamekeeper having previously been sent by him on an errand which should have occupied several hours. But the suspicious husband did not follow his master's instructions; instead, he remained near the house, watching, until the Crown Prince appeared. Then—either just as he entered the house or shortly afterward—the man, maddened by jealousy, rushed upon the Prince and struck him down with a rain of blows, inflicted with a club or iron bar or something else—no one knows what. Heedless of the consequences of such an act, he then tossed the fatally injured man into the road and left him there to die by degrees.

This is proven, says Margutti, by the fact that the doctors—some of the best in a country noted for its medical science—assured him that Marie had died several hours before the Crown Prince. He says that the physicians also told him that the Prince's head was frightfully beaten in with many blows from some heavy instrument, and that there were no bullet wounds in the body. This might explain why the head was so carefully covered with a bandage when the death photograph was taken, and, indeed, until the time of burial.

Count Apponyi, a prominent Hungarian nobleman, had a theory that the gamekeeper had been employed by Marie Vetsera to slay the Prince. He insisted that Marie knew of Rudolph's new flirtation. He said that she was an exceptionally jealous and ambitious woman, tremendously excitable in times of stress, and that her vanity had been so deeply wounded by the apparent failure of her affair with Rudolph that she was ready to go to any length to obtain revenge.

COUNTESS Larisch says that some time before his death Rudolph had entrusted to her care a small iron box which he said contained important papers which he feared to have in his own possession. Shortly after the double tragedy the Archduke John, a cousin of the Emperor, requested her to deliver the box to him. He admitted to her that had the contents of the box been revealed to the Emperor or the police before Rudolph's death, the Crown Prince would have been liable to execution for treason; for he had plotted to separate Hungary from Austria and make himself king of the former country.

Whatever the Emperor and his officials may have known of the real facts of the tragedy, they banished a number of people who were connected with it in one way or another, or who had a hand in the love affair of Rudolph and Marie. As already mentioned, Marie's mother was compelled to leave on the night after her daughter's death—and other members of the Vetsera and Baldazzi families followed her. Two other nobles, as well as Loschek, the Prince's valet, and Koinoff, who was probably a spy, were also quickly ordered to cross the frontier. The Archduke John shortly afterward left Europe, but whether because of this tragedy it is difficult to say. We shall deal with his strange story in another article.

Countess Anastasia Wimpffen, an old lady of the Court, in whose drawing-room the lovers had had many stolen meetings, was so frightened by the trend of events that she committed suicide by taking poison. And finally, Countess Larisch and her husband are said to have been ordered out. She had been a go-between for Rudolph and Marie, and may have plotted their affair from the start. At any rate, she was in very bad favor with the Emperor. She does not admit in her memoirs that she was banished, but it is significant that she and her husband left Austria at once and never returned. In later years she is said to have known the pinch of poverty.

WHAT is the truth of the matter? Ah, that is a question that will probably never be answered. The present writer rather leans toward Baron Margutti's theory, which was believed in by many reputable and well-informed persons, and was supported by evidence, some of which appeared very plausible. But even this cannot be vouched for. In spite of the testimony against it, numbers of romantic Viennese to this day will assure you that the affair was a double suicide by agreement between two lovers—and they may quote to you the anonymous poem which appeared shortly afterward and which ran, in part:

Sleep, my beloved, sleep!
Be patient! We shall keep
Our secret closely hid
Beneath the coffin lid.
There is no other place in earth or air
For such a love as ours, or such despair.

* * *

Burglars' Charms

THE charm most prized by burglars of certain European countries is the finger of a corpse, the carrying of which in the pocket is supposed to increase their skill at their trade. If the finger belonged to a condemned criminal or to an adroit thief, so much the better. It is also believed that a purse in which a finger-joint is kept will always contain a supply of money. The finger of a murdered man is greatly prized because it is supposed to possess a magic power in opening locks.

The Witches' Sabbath

By ARTHUR F. HARRIS

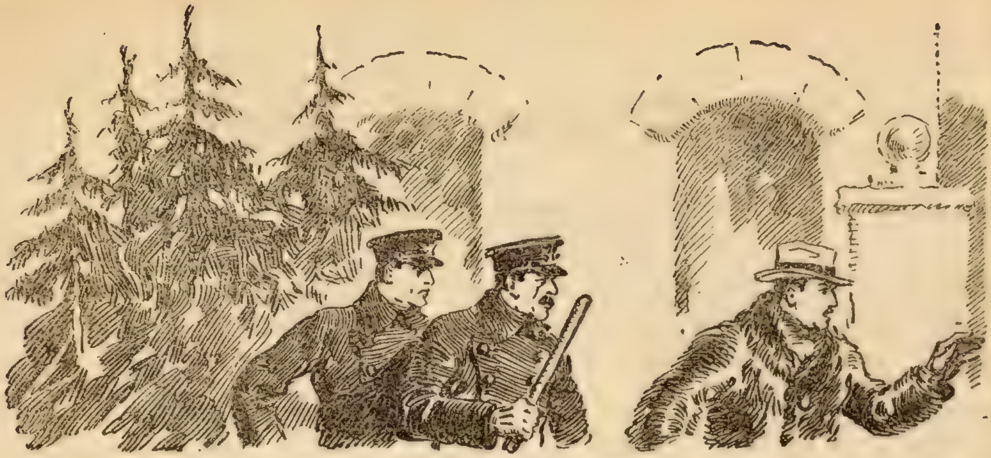
THE witch cult, that strange pagan religion which survived in Europe until the seventeenth century, and even crept into the American colonies, had two kinds of meetings. The one, a sort of business meeting, was attended only by the thirteen witches, or members of the local "coven"—the elders, as it were, of the local congregation, who carried out the secret rites and mysteries.

These meetings were held every week or so, though they might be called at special times by the devil, or leader. The chief business at such meetings was often the planning of charms to benefit one of the cult, or of spells to use against personal enemies of the witches, though other matters might be attended to. There is record of a case in which the witches met in a churchyard and dug bones from the graves to be used in magic potions.

But the great assemblies, the "sabbaths," which all the members of the cult attended, were less frequent, and, singularly enough, some of them fell on church holy days. The chief ones were May Eve (April 30th), called Roodmas in England and Walpurgis Night in Germany, and November Eve (October 31st), better known as Allhallow Eve or Hallowe'en. Between these came Candlemas (February 2nd) and Lammas (August 1st). Midsummer Day, Yule (which, with the introduction of Christianity, became Christmas), and the old pagan festival, Easter, were also witch carnival days. On such nights, good Christians of the fold stayed indoors, shuddering with horror at the thought of the demoniac doings that were going on.

Many of the assemblies were held in the open, on hills or in certain "haunted" spots in forests or in ravines, though there were a few cases where they were staged indoors. The meeting began at midnight and lasted until dawn. It was to and from these assemblies that the witches, both male and female, were believed to fly through the air on broomsticks or unearthly steeds.

The Grand Master, or Devil, of the district presided, and by the witches was believed to be Satan himself. He was often disguised to represent an immense cat or dog or other animal. There was always a great feast at the sabbath, at which the witches would tell of evil deeds they had accomplished. Then there would be dancing and indescribably obscene rites which were relics of the old heathen devil-worship.



There was a slight scuffle, and the policemen ran forward—but they were too late.

Snow Men

By MARK PLUM

Up in a land of chill winds and cold-blooded men and women a great statue was carved out of ice and moulded with snow by an alien, passionate hand. And the tragedy was that when the spring thaw came, the snow man was doomed to melt.

LOREN FISHER'S disappearance caused little comment at first. His fiancée and his family were progressively annoyed with him, worried about him, and dismayed. As the days passed and a week went by without his return, they called in the Cold Harbor police. These busied themselves, as small-town police will do, with futile questionings of uninformed persons. Clyde Gauntlett, state's attorney, was summoned from Red Wing. He worked hard and learned little. A busy man, he could spare scant time on this one case. He wired for Plain John Smith.

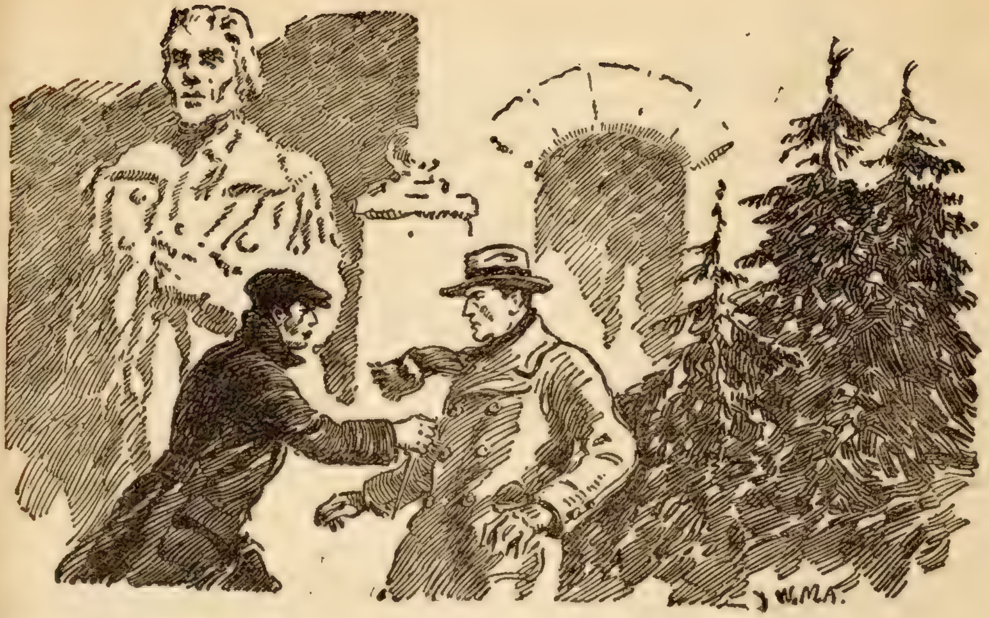
"Curious business," he explained when the detective arrived. "Nice young fellow engaged to a more than nice young girl. Every one happy. Chap calls on her one night, starts home about one P. X., and never reaches there. Girl gets worried next day. Family gets worried in a few days, and they've been worrying me and the police ever since."

John Smith grunted.

"Had a wife somewhere else, I suppose. Had to vanish."

"Not Loren Fisher. Brought up in this town. Never spent more than a couple of days out of it. Simple, guileless country boy."

"Huh!" the detective ejaculated. "I know these simple country folk.



But, at that, there is probably little to it. Women like to alarm themselves. He may just have decided he didn't want to marry this—what's her name?—and have run away. He wouldn't be the first."

"Her name is Anna Imlay. But you haven't seen her, John! She's a Venus! A little over-cushioned for your taste, perhaps, though I like them plump myself. But her skin—peaches and cream! And her eyes and hair——! Nope, old boy. No man ever ran away from Anna."

"H'm!" said the detective cynically. "You never can tell."

HE ROLLED a cigar thoughtfully between his fingers and surveyed the landscape. Snow-coated hills surrounded an ice-covered lake. A winter palace built of ice blocks stood beside the latter, and at its gates a monster snow man loomed in the distance.

"Nice lake you've got out there," he said. "Was Fisher a skater?"

"Oh, yes. Every one is up here. But he didn't fall in, if that's your theory. The lake was kept in perfect condition for the annual winter tournament."

John Smith looked up sharply.

"A tournament? Crowds of strangers, I suppose? Do you know if Fisher showed any special friendliness toward any of them?"

"That idea is off, too. He was a reserved, mind-your-own-business sort of a person, like most of the Cold Harbor folk. The tournament lasts all January and brings quite a little revenue into the town, but the local people never mix with the outsiders. Rather a cold lot."

"Cold town, too." John Smith shivered. The temperature was below zero, and he was not yet warm after his ride from the train. He nodded toward the great snow man, several blocks away. "Decent looking bit of modeling. Who did that?"

"Thereby hangs a tale." Clyde Gauntlett chuckled. "It's a statue of Oles Larson, pioneer and founder of Cold Harbor. They have one every year, at the entrance to the sports field. Heretofore, it has been carved by the town's chief stonecutter, a specialist in tombs, I believe. This year the councilors decided to get something better."

"Looks as though they got it," stated the detective.

"They wrote to the Art Institute at Chicago, I understand, and explained what they wanted. Some needy young student, who was also capable. Offered a reasonable fee and suggested as well"—Gauntlett grinned again—"that the publicity attached to the job might be of assistance to a youthful artist. It looks as though he would get plenty of that."

"Why so?"

"Anna Imlay swears he killed Fisher."

"Good God! Do you believe her?"

"Oh, I don't believe anything in this case. I'm not even guessing. The sculptor, Peter Geralti, is a Sicilian, I believe. But the fact that he's not a *bona fide* Chicagoan is no proof that he would not murder."

"It might be urged in his favor."

"Oh, he's got plenty in his favor. We haven't a thing on him. Fisher may, as you suggest, have gone away of his own accord. In which case he'll probably turn up shortly, sore as a boil at his girl for calling in the police. Or he may, as she seems to believe, have been murdered. There's nothing to go on either way. He disappeared the last night of the tournament—Carnival night. If there was any struggle, all signs of it were wiped out by the crowd. We have no body, no blood, no traces of him after he left his girl's house."

"You've questioned this Geralti?"

"Oh, sure. And warned him not to leave town. He was very polite—too polite. Said he would be delighted to remain. Seemed rather amused at the whole affair."

"Haven't you anything to hold him on besides the lady's suspicions?"

"Not a thing. The police found nothing wrong in his room. He was seen entering the place where he boards an hour before the murder or disappearance or whatever it was could have taken place, and no one saw him leave it. But Anna's absolutely positive. She swears that Fisher was murdered and that Geralti murdered him. Doesn't know how, when, or what, and has no proofs of anything."

"Just sweet, womanly intuition."

"Well, Geralti had made love to her, too. She's a luscious creature!" He blew a figurative kiss. "The pretty dear probably thinks she was worth a murder or two."

"So Geralti made love to her as well? Vamp, is she?"

"Not the vamp type. A bit cold, if anything. Geralti fell for her looks probably. Stayed on after he finished his statue and called frequently."

The detective grew thoughtful.

"I wonder just when the lady told him she was engaged?" Gauntlett frowned. "Like her yourself, don't you, Clyde?"

The state's attorney grinned reluctantly.

"She's so darned good-looking," he admitted. "Well, now you have it, John! I haven't any more time to waste on this job. Go around and see Geralti yourself and tell me what you think of him. I'd back your intuition against the feminine variety any day."

"Intuition!" grumbled Smith. "I never use it. It's brains with me. Brains and hard work."

"Modest feller!" said Gauntlett, and rose to go. "I have a train to catch. I'll be back in the morning, but I've got to make Perry to-day."

"All right. Cut along, fat boy," said the detective sweetly in farewell. "I'll look after this little affair until you return."

Anna Imlay's house was directly opposite the sports field, with the lake and the white hills beyond. The gleaming ice palace was only a hundred feet from her door, and in front of it rose the great, carven figure of Oles Larson. John Smith, on his way to interview the girl, stopped before it and gasped. Here was no conscientious student's work. Here was Art itself—Genius, unquestionable and intolerable.

The sculptor had not been satisfied to reproduce the face of Oles Larson. He had carved into that great, icy figure a personality, chilly, remote and austere, taking its nature from the cold fields and icy lake about. It was human and yet inhuman, a being incapable of passion or of pain, representative of that aloof Puritanism which refused to recognize or to concede to human nature. The detective gazed at it, and, as the passionless frigidity of its still face penetrated into his veins, he rendered the tribute of an involuntary shiver. Another man, standing near, smiled as he saw him and asked softly:

"You find him cold?"

Plain John Smith shook his head. He had no words to express his opinion of the great statue, and answered stupidly:

"It is made of snow."

"Pouf! That was not why you shivered. It is all snow here, this cold, cold country. The men are cold. Like my statue. The women —b-r-r-r-r!" And he shivered, also.

John Smith regarded him curiously. So this was Geralti!

"You did that snow man? It's a wonderful piece of work."

"Wonderful! Yes. And made out of snow and ice. It will melt, if snow and ice ever do melt in this frozen land, and vanish, and be forgotten." He laughed suddenly, and the experienced detective recognized a note of strained tensity in the man's pose and words.

"Poor devil!" he thought. "He's on edge all right. Now, did he kill Fisher or does he know what did happen to him? He isn't afraid, at any rate." He kept silent, and the Sicilian went on, half speaking to himself, stirred into talk apparently as much by the contemplation of his statue as by the casual companionship of this unassuming stranger.

"That statue it is of the man who began this town. I had pictures and an old bust to work from. But his spirit, the icy, frozen spirit that chills you when you see him, I learned from watching the people of this town. They are all alike—cold, cold. Snow men. Snow men, like my statue; and the women are made of ice, frozen. But my snow man, the only one of the lot worth saving, will melt when the spring comes. That is the difference."

He fell into a silence while Smith watched him, hoping the emotion-charged artist would speak again. But he turned away, and the detective, over-hurriedly, asked: "Did you know Loren Fisher?" and looked to catch some expression that would solve the mystery. But Geralti only caught himself sharply and turned, smiling quaintly, toward the questioner.

"I am stupid. I forget that I am a suspect now. Know Loren Fisher? There was nothing there to know. A snow man, as cold and chaste as this creation of mine." He flung his hand passionately out toward the immaculate figure he had carved.

"Do you know where he is?"

"I? Perhaps. Maybe his snow maiden froze him to death with her kisses. Go and see." Some inner amusement possessed him, and Smith turned away. But he did not call, that day, on Anna Imlay.

The detective slept badly that night, the cold face of Oles Larson and the passionate one of the sculptor intermingling in his dreams. Early in the morning he was roused by brisk knocks on his chamber door.

"Oh, get out!" he called peevishly, and cursed his early caller.

Another rap.

"Oh, blast!" he ejaculated, and reached a long arm to the door-key.

Clyde Gauntlett entered and sat down upon his bed. Smith groaned.

"Slave driver!" he said. "Is this any hour to disturb a friend?"

Clyde eyed him thoughtfully.

"I didn't suppose," he said after a moment of weighty deliberation, "that there was a night-shirt left in Chicago. Did you wear your pajamas out while here and have to buy that in Cold Harbor?"

"I'm an old-fashioned man, thank God!" snapped the detective. "And if you make fun of my night-shirt, I'll tell your constituents that your pajamas are lavender with gold frogs on them, and that you wear silk undershirts."

"Help!" cried Gauntlett, laughing. Then he sobered. "I have bad news for you—if it is news. Geralti was arrested last night."

"The devil he was!" Smith was disturbed. "They can't hold him. A bit premature, seems to me."

"Exactly. We haven't a thing on him. He can get out in no time if he knows enough."

"Or hires the right lawyer. Did you expect this, Clyde?"

"In a way. Geralti doesn't matter a darn to the police here, but the Imlays and the Fishers matter a lot. However, I'm counting on you to get me evidence that will either hold him or set him definitely free." He looked at his friend affectionately. "What did you learn from Anna yesterday?"

"Didn't see her."

"Why, you lazy hound! She was home yesterday, I know. I suppose you didn't see Geralti, either? Before they nabbed him?"

"I had luck there." He gave a brief account of the meeting. "Make anything of that, Clyde?"

"Nothing—except that that darned ordinary mug of yours is worth a fortune to you. No one ever notices it. You melt into the landscape and get talked at as though you were a pet animal."

"Thanks. My appearance matches my name, and neither would draw a crowd, thank Heaven! Be worth more to me if I were a crook instead of a mere crook-chaser, though. Too bad I was born honest." He sighed.

Gauntlett laughed and slapped his friend's shoulder.

"Get up and call on Anna Imlay. It will cheer you to look at her. Maybe it's just as well you didn't see her yesterday. Now I can tag along."

"You're too darned human for a prosecuting attorney, Clyde," grinned Smith. "But come along if you want to."

THEY walked along the lake and stopped in front of the cold, sculptured figure of the great snow man. The detective nodded toward it.

"Too bad it isn't marble," he said. "It would last long after Loren Fisher had been forgotten."

They crossed the street and examined it at closer range. It swept upward in long lines to the massive torso and head of Oles Larson, far larger than life size. The mouth was thin and firm, the chin set, the icy eyes stared ahead, uninterested and passionless. Clyde Gauntlett shivered.

"Yep. That's the way it struck me. Darned cold proposition. But great. Geralti said he got the likeness from old portraits, but the spirit from other men in the town."

"He seems to have hated this town and its men pretty thoroughly," said the attorney thoughtfully.

Plain John Smith walked slowly around the great statue, viewing it from every angle.

"It's magnificent," he said, rejoining his friend in front. "A pity it can't last. It's cracked already, and they've had to patch it up here and there. The carnival crowds were rough and thick and without respect for genius."

"It is genius, then?" asked Gauntlett.

"Unquestionably." Smith shrugged impatiently. "But we're wasting time. Let's call on this female of yours."

"She isn't mine."

"The better for you, I imagine." Something had irritated the detective.

HE found Anna all that his friend had said—luxuriantly beautiful, pink and white in the right places, with eyes as blue as the lake across from her house. Nature had given a wonderful covering to her body, but the detective was doubtful if the interior matched it. "Cold and conceited," he summed her up, and refused to like her. He preferred them warm and gentle.

She was cool toward him, but went to the point at once in answering his questions. Yes, Loren Fisher was engaged to her. They had been engaged for some years. They intended to marry when he had saved enough for a little farm of his own. Yes, Geralti had called on her a few times. He had seemed unusual and interesting. No, her engagement to Loren had never been actually announced, but most of the townspeople took it for granted.

"Point is, did Geralti take it for granted?" said John Smith. "He made love to you, too, didn't he?"

Anna wavered and he pressed her.

"Kissed you? That sort of thing?"

There were sharp-edged icicles in her eyes, but she spoke composedly.

"I was engaged to Loren, Mr. Smith."

The detective meditated a moment.

"When did Geralti learn you were engaged to Fisher?"

She hesitated again, but finally answered:

"Well, there was no occasion to mention it. When he asked me to marry him, I explained the situation."

"Oh, waited for that, did you? Let him call, and hang around, and hope? Then sprang the engaged racket? What did you want from him? Just amusement?"

"Really!" Anna rose to her feet, clutching at her dignity. "This is abominable! I refuse to discuss it with you any longer."

"Do you? I wouldn't if I were you. You want Loren found, don't you? Did it ever occur to you that he might have been hurt by your—er—your little interlude with the Sicilian and left town of his own accord?"

Her composure was returning, and she was definite in her reply.

"No," she said, "that would not occur to me. Loren was not like that. He was not easily disturbed or annoyed."

"Another snow man!" said Smith to Gauntlett in an aside, but she heard him and started.

"That is what Peter called him," she said. "He mocked us both. Called Loren 'your snow man,' and spoke of me as an ice statue. Oh, he's a beast, and I hate him! Why don't you hang him?"

"Easy now—easy. That takes time, you know. And proof, too. We haven't any of that yet. Tell me about the last time you saw Fisher."

"We went to the Carnival that last night together. We skated and danced for a while and then came here when it was over. He stayed a short while. The crowd had all gone when he left. His father phoned early the next morning that he had not come home. No one had seen him after he left me. I know Geralti killed him."

"You watched him go? Know what street he took?"

"No, but he always cut across the lake in winter. His father's home is up behind the hills."

PLAIN JOHN SMITH considered. He wanted to ask some more questions, insulting ones for choice. He did not like this girl who played so composedly with passions she never would share. He was certain she had found Geralti's devotion "interesting" and had experimented for her own amusement. Well, she had caught a Tartar. A Sicilian hates as well as he loves. He hoped Fisher's disappearance had hurt her a little, but he doubted it. She was cold.

Gauntlett was annoyed with his friend, and showed it when they left.

"You needn't have been quite so nasty."

"Needn't I? What did you want me to do? Kiss her? Like Geralti?"

"I don't believe he kissed her. She was insulted at the suggestion."

"Oh, yes! Too insulted. 'I was engaged to Loren, Mr. Smith.' " He mocked the frigid voice. "That cold kind likes to experiment with men because it feels so safe itself. No danger of burning its own fingers. I have no doubt she found Geralti's love-making amusing. She certainly hates him now, though. He probably mussed up her self-satisfaction a bit. She killed Fisher, you know," he added abruptly.

"Good God!" Gauntlett jumped a foot. "You're crazy, man!"

"Wouldn't like to prosecute her, would you?" He smiled maliciously. "Well, you won't have to. I didn't mean that she actually knifed him. A better person than she will probably hang for her, more's the pity. But she is to blame for his death just the same."

"I don't agree with you." The state's attorney was irritated. "And we are not getting anywhere with this nonsense, either. Do you believe Geralti killed Fisher?"

"Yes."

Gauntlett looked surprised again.

"Do you? Well, maybe so. But can you prove it? We would be laughed out of court if we went in with the evidence we have now."

"And you have an election coming on in six months and can't afford mistakes. Nor to get the newspapers down on you for non-prosecution of this kind of a case, either. Yours and mine are rotten jobs, Clyde."

"You're not fair. John. God knows I hate to see the man who modeled that snow man hang, but if he did kill Fisher, I'll hang him just the same. And not because of the election, either."

Plain John Smith placed his hand on his friend's shoulder.

"I know," he said soothingly. "You're a conscientious duffer. Don't mind me. This job has soured me. I'll get your evidence for you."

"You'll have to get the body first, you know."

"Oh, yes." Smith was casual. "I'll meet you at the jail in half an hour." He went on by himself.

When Gauntlett reached the prison, John Smith was already there and playing with the stiletto the police had found among Geralti's things.

"That what he killed him with?" asked Gauntlett.

"Oh, no!" Smith was shocked. "You're so obvious, Clyde. And blind, too. Bad combination. Why, there's rust on this knife. It hasn't been used for years. We'll take it along, though.

"I want Geralti," he went on. "The police say he won't talk. I believe he will under proper influences. That snow man of his, for instance, started him going yesterday, and to a total stranger. Let's take him back there now and see if old Oles Larson will loosen his tongue again. Don't handcuff him, though. I want him at ease."

"It's irregular," said Gauntlett, hesitating.

"Oh, take along a couple of police for guards. I want to test out an idea of mine."

THE little Sicilian was brown and keen, with white teeth and somber eyes. Arrest had not tamed him any. Clyde Gauntlett noticed his size and wondered whether the prisoner could really have killed the heavier Dane. Plain John Smith looked at the wiry frame and muscular arms of the sculptor and was sorry. He thought he understood the case at last, and wished he didn't.

"This yours?" he asked, holding the stiletto toward the prisoner.

The Sicilian nodded.

Clyde Gauntlett was less attracted by the man. But then, he admired Anna.

"How many men have you killed with it?" he asked roughly.

Geralti shrugged his shoulders.

"None," he answered indifferently, but his eyes veered rapidly around toward John Smith as the detective interrupted Gauntlett with a frown.

"I told you you were too obvious, Clyde. Geralti here is more subtle. Aren't you, Geralti? We're going up to see your snow man again. Better take a good look at him this time. He's worth it. And you may never see him again, you know. There's prison and hanging ahead."

Gauntlett's shoulder twitched at the brutality, but Smith's eyes were kindly enough. Geralti regarded him steadily for a minute.

"You are clever," he stated.

"So were you, Geralti. Clever and subtle. And you're a very good sculptor. I wish we did not have to hang you."

"Maybe you will not," said Geralti quietly. "I do not wish to hang."

"Oh, come on," broke in Gauntlett roughly. "I don't get your idea, but let's get it over with."

John Smith dropped the slim knife into his pocket and led forth the procession. He stopped in front of the statue and looked at it long. When he turned again to the sculptor, his eyes were wet.

"A pity it isn't in marble," he said soberly. "We go in back now, don't we, Geralti?"

The sculptor stepped toward him. There was a slight scuffle, and Gauntlett, with the two policemen, ran forward—but they were too late. The quick Sicilian had snatched the stiletto from John Smith's pocket and thrust it home. He lay at the foot of his statue, and the detective knelt above him.

"No, he won't hang," he said quietly. "Nor rot in jail."

GAUNTLETT stammered: "But, my God! I don't understand! Did you intend this?"

"Perhaps," said John Smith. "It

saves putting your pretty friend, Anna, on the stand, anyway."

"And Fisher?"

"Oh, he's here. His body, that is. Come around."

The detective dug at the back of the great figure. There was fresh snow there, not the solid stuff of the rest of the statue. It came away easily. Inside, bound tightly with ropes, was the imprisoned body of Loren Fisher. The condition of the snow about him indicated that the man had died after entombment.

"Good God!" cried Gauntlett. "He put him there alive to freeze!"

"Yes. Struggled a bit, didn't he? That's what cracked the statue. It didn't take him long to die there, though. Nor did he suffer much. Subtle fellow, Geralti. His 'snow man,' eh?

"I don't suppose we shall ever know exactly where Geralti lay in wait for Fisher, nor how he caught him. But hands that chisel marble are strong enough to subdue most ordinary men. Every one had gone home when Fisher started back across the field. Even Geralti himself, clever chap, but he sneaked out again, unobserved, and caught his enemy. Scooped out a cold grave for him and packed him in. He thought he was safe until spring, undoubtedly."

"What a devil!"

"Oh, I don't know. At least, give the devil his due. These Northern girls don't understand Sicilians, and he was tormented too far."

"I believe you meant him to kill himself," accused the attorney.

"My dear Clyde! Don't take that reproachful tone. Consider the money it has saved the state. And the publicity saved your pretty little, chilly blonde across the way. Besides, he was too good to hang. He did this, you know." And he patted the base of the great statue. "We owe him something for that."

"How did you know where he had hidden the body?"

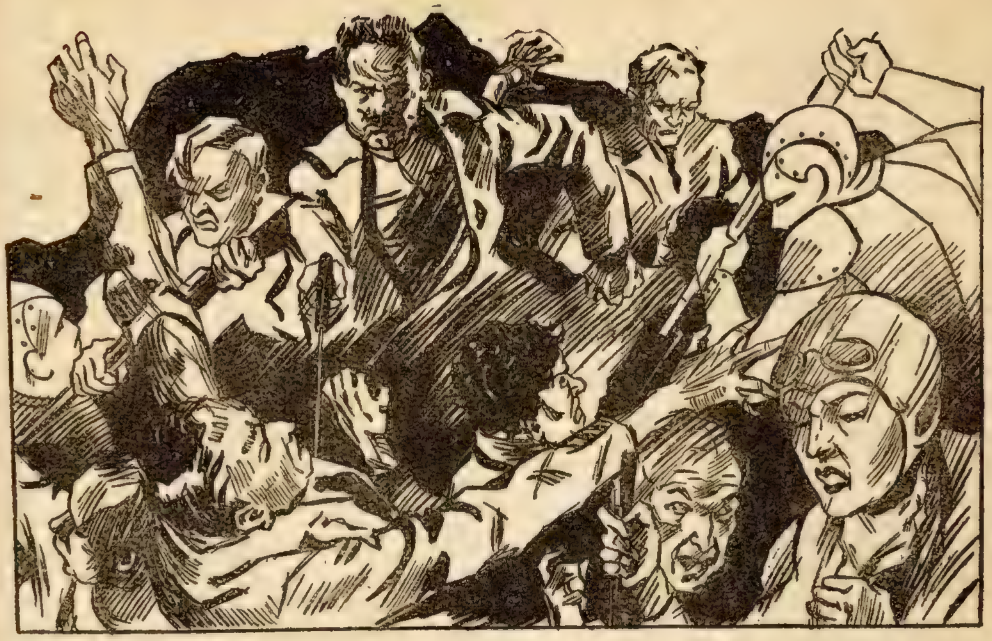
"He was too clever. Admired his own idea too much. Made too many comparisons between 'snow men.' And I saw that the back of the statue had been filled, comparatively recently, with fresh snow. It wasn't hard to find the right combination. Let's get on now," he added. "I want my lunch, and the police can gather up the pieces."

One of the two policemen remained by the bodies, and the other went to phone the station. Gauntlett and his friend followed slowly. Across the street, Smith stopped and looked back at the black bodies and the red smudge below the immaculate statue that towered, perfect and passionless, above the group. He took off his hat, and, hesitatingly, Gauntlett followed his example.

"To the murderer or the murdered?" he asked.

"Neither," replied Plain John Smith. "Just to that." And he nodded toward the snow figure. "Pity it can't last," he said. "Come on, now. I'm hungry."

"Hungry!" cried Clyde Gauntlett.



Von Karl was standing against terrific odds.

The Spy Master

A SERIES

By RICHARD WILMER ROWAN

VI. Brutes of Steel

Von Karl outbids his foes, and then proceeds to raise havoc. But for a moment control is taken out of his hands, and he plays the inglorious rôle of helpless prisoner.

I

WHEN Conrad von Karl came in to see me I knew at once that he was posing as a physician. Yet it was not merely this pose which seemed to have altered his manner toward me. I sensed at once that the change had to do with Diane. Had he, perhaps, fallen in love with her also? And was he cold and reserved with me now, after all our adventures together, because he hated me as his successful rival?

But still, I reflected as I lay there, not so very successful! I seemed to be his captive, and I had no knowledge of any events or even of the mere passage of time since that day in Strassburg—the day Diane was to have been executed as a French spy!

Von Karl, his swarthy face a little worn and sallow, I thought, in contrast with the gleaming white surgical garb, stood over me and stared and appeared to study my case profoundly. With him there had entered a veritable war goddess, though in nurse's spotless garb. And she too stared as if doubting my reality.

"Perhaps," said I irrelevantly, "the modern goddess of war would turn to nursing—what with gas, and shrapnel wounds, and high explosives blowing off arms and legs——"

VON KARL frowned. He turned to the strapping Bellona, and, to my surprise, addressed her in Russian. I gathered that he had said she was exciting me, and had told her to withdraw. She went out at once, and he came back to my bedside with a sneer.

"No more need to pretend you are mad," he said. "I can protect you here without that."

I sat up, resenting his tone. "If you will give me some clothes and tell me where I am and why," I retorted, "I'll guarantee to protect myself."

"As in Strassburg?" he reminded me with crushing emphasis.

"I admit my fault there. But when I heard that muffled volley in the prison yard and believed that they had shot Diane before we could save her——"

"Save her?" he interrupted harshly. "I had already saved her. And then she saved you, my friend, though I don't know why."

I was unaccustomed to his scorn, though often enough I had heard him pour it out at white heat upon the head of some other offender.

"As a matter of fact," I said, "you saved me yourself, pretending I was a victim of shell shock."

"Pretending, eh?" he jeered. "You were as crazy as any one I ever hope to handle. You played the hysterical fool." But then his irritation seemed to subside, and he explained to me how he had secured Diane's release by bribery.

"Money," he pursued, "will get even a spy out of jail, provided nothing occurs to make the spy well-known. That was why I dreaded your wild outburst. She hadn't been set free yet, and if you had even so much as started a rumor going through the city about her, then nothing could have saved her. Higher authorities would have had to satisfy their sense of dignity and discipline by making certain that she was shot according to the sentence of the court-martial."

He related how Diane had simply been removed from her cell and hidden temporarily in a small room near the jail-yard entrance. The squad which had fired that volley I had heard with unimaginable terror had been supposed to be practising. Actually they had fired so that a certain official—to whom the bribe money had not extended—would be convinced Diane had been done to death. Afterward, when it was dark, she had been set free.

VON KARL would have liked to continue his narrative with details of the flight from Strassburg, tormenting me with the thought that I had extended Diane's jeopardy when he himself had well contrived it that she should be safe. But now she came into the room in the becoming uniform of a nurse. She favored me with a wondrous smile, but also affected the disciplined manner of one who played the subordinate—as though she were hardly sure of Von Karl's attitude.

Wanting to kiss her, I harshly blamed the Spy Master for her constraint.

"Have you told him?" she asked Von Karl.

"Told me what?" I exclaimed.

"About this place——" he began.

"I know it is a sanitarium and also a kind of spy school. Diane told me that when I first—came to," said I. "But how are we to get away?"

Von Karl smiled mockingly. "You shriek and beat with your fist upon some convenient wall," he observed, looking at my hands, which were still bruised and lacerated from my vain assault upon the Strassburg jail. "Then you fly out of the window," he added with a shrug.

Diane's fine eyes flashed resentfully, for she understood that he ridiculed what I had done only because I loved her and despaired of her life. Von Karl perceived her anger and put an end to the topic.

"Enough!" said he. "We are here together and must continue to work together."

"For the Allies?" I questioned.

He ignored that, and continued: "This is a real sanitarium, with very strict regulations. I am a part owner, and am entitled to participate in the management, for knocking around in the flotsam and jetsam of my life there is a genuine medical degree. However, in the midst of devastating war, civilian nerve diseases become less fashionable. I backed Dr. Lorrach in starting this place, but its prosperity came to an end last winter. It is not conveniently enough located for a military hospital. But secret service neurosis fortunately has saved the plant from decay.

"It is a place of rest and retreat, and a school of training. German secret agents whose assignments have been particularly difficult and dangerous suffer a more or less official breakdown, and come here to allow their skill and courage and patriotism to snap back into place. Agents of the Allies who are taken prisoner, but who seem worth more to Germany alive than dead, are sent here to make up their minds. It is to them a kind of pleasant purgatory, before they pass on to the underworld of what must to most of them, I dare say, seem like treason, betrayal, and the rest of those evils. A few remain here and are called insane. Those allowed to leave, whether German or any other nationality, take my orders," he concluded. "We are very particular about that."

"Then you no longer need to hide and disguise yourself," I said. "With this doctor for your tool——"

"Lorrach is nobody's tool," Von Karl replied. "He is an intensely patriotic Bavarian. Diane he believes to be an Austrian, because she has the gift of languages. But you, my friend, are a sick prisoner in Lorrach's view—a Canadian in the British secret service, he thinks. Try to act accordingly, and avoid a straitjacket. If he thought you were an American—a neutral interfering in a European struggle—I wouldn't answer for the consequences. He'd probably want to take you apart and see if your soul cared to sit for an X-ray portrait."

Diane was permitted only a moment by my side in imperfect privacy. She had just given my least damaged hand a reassuring squeeze, when Von Karl turned back from the door and said she must come with him. Thereafter my meals were brought, and I was indifferently waited upon, by the stalwart Russian woman, who gave me but two impressions—that she knew little or nothing about nursing, and that she was physically powerful enough to make a good match for any pair of men my size.

APPARENTLY muscular qualities were the vogue at this sanitarium. Next morning I was visited by the *Herr Doktor* himself, and, save for eye-glasses and a pointed blond beard, he suggested to me a refined type of heavyweight pugilist. The nurse who came with him was Diane. He looked me over very carefully, and spoke to her in German, and she replied in that tongue, never by so much as a word or glance indicating acquaintance with me or more than an impersonal interest in my case. Lorrach's remarks I interpreted to mean that Von Karl had told him I had been arrested in Antwerp, where I had been hiding ever since the surrender of that city. I was, moreover, supposed to be the victim of hallucinations and sometimes of melancholia. Diane kept a perfectly straight face. I pretended not to understand. And what he chose to say to me in English was unaccented and courteous in the extreme.

No more did I hear of Conrad von Karl until late that afternoon. Formerly the Spy Master had found me so companionable that my life had been cast away upon a sea of incessant perils. Because he deemed me a clever amateur in secret service work, I had twice been wounded and had risked arrest and certain execution in Essen and Strassburg and sundry intermediate stations. But now he seemed able to plot his course without my coöperation. It was near dusk, and I was wondering when I might see Diane alone, and how long I must perform as a nervous wreck, and what the Russian giantess would confer upon me for my next meal—when a brisk young man strode into my room and bowed to me with astonishing gallantry.

If I lacked the necessary hallucinations, were some to be supplied me? The visitor was dressed in the leathern garments of an aviator or automobile racing driver. He carried what appeared to be exact duplicates of his shoes and puttees, breeches, heavy coat, cap, and gloves. He placed the outfit at the foot of my hospital bed, and then spoke with intended huskiness:

"Get up. You are cured. Be quick!"

It was Diane. And she laughed gaily when I had recognized her.

"Come—we have only ten minutes! Von Karl is waiting," she said. "I'll turn my back on you now, my dear, and then you can leap modestly into those things."

"Are we going to fly somewhere?"

"No, I think not. But Von Karl wishes you and me to look as nearly alike as possible. He believes he can then get us both away together."

"Fine!"

I was surprised to discover myself so weakened by the period of lying in bed. But I dragged on the breeches and a flannel shirt which had been rolled up in the coat, and was wrestling with socks and shoes when a wave of dizziness swept over me, and I found myself in a heap on the floor. Diane sprang to help me with a little anxious cry. Thanks to her, I finished my dressing; and though I had feared she would suggest that I give in and admit myself not yet strong enough for the coming adventure, she instead urged me to make every effort. Von Karl, said she, would not be detained. And whatever it was he had in mind, he seemed to attach extraordinary importance to our getting away at once.

AT LAST she guided me out and along a dim hallway, down a steep flight of stairs, and through another hall, to a side entrance of what I judged to be an extensive building or connected group of buildings. A motor car of powerful design stood throbbing and ready. Conrad von Karl waited beside it—and with him Dr. Lorrach. I felt Diane stiffen in sudden alarm. But Von Karl had seen us, and his gesture was imperious, impatient, almost savage.

He was wearing a cloak with a hood. From beneath this garment he drew a heavy revolver and unexpectedly aimed it at me.

"Did he resist you?" he cried.

"No—oh, no, he didn't," said Diane, playing up. "He seems rather weak and moody, Doctor——"

"Get in," said Von Karl to me. And I obeyed like the stricken creature I was cast to be.

Putting me beside him in the front seat, Von Karl handed Diane the revolver and told her to keep me covered. If I made any move as though to interfere with his driving, she was to shoot without parley. I ventured to say I would attempt nothing provocative.

"Shut up!" snapped the Spy Master.

Lorrach laughed with more than a prize-fighter's lung power. I hated the fellow, but began to understand the yarn he had swallowed when he exclaimed: "If you need any more specimens—rabbits or guinea pigs—I can oblige."

Van Karl answered brusquely, though given to such humor himself at times. Obviously, the physician believed I was being made use of—taken somewhere to run a risk or to do something that was gravely dangerous, but concealed from my comprehension. Rabbit! Guinea pig! Perhaps I had become only a laboratory exhibit. Certainly Von Karl's favor had been lost, and Diane I knew to be almost as much in the dark as I. Had she not been startled to see Lorrach here, aware of our going?

The Panhard with its noisy chain-drive set off now like a thunderbolt. Genuine neurasthenics in the sanitarium must have heard the crack of doom; but we were out and away before they could do more than wonder. The roads were firm and the evening crisp and clear. Von Karl drove with his customary recklessness, and we were nearly upon the outskirts of Munich before he slowed down and the quieter engine permitted him to talk.

II

"HOW do you feel, prisoner?" he chuckled, with much of his former camaraderie returning in tone and manner. And to Diane he said: "You can give me back that gun. The prologue has ended."

She handed him the heavy weapon and asked the first question about our journey.

"We are going around Munich," said he, "and altogether have a ride of some two hundred kilometers before we reach our probable destination."

"Why do you say probable?"

"For reasons of pedantic accuracy. Where we are going, my young friends, there may not be any destination by the time we arrive. Or, again, we may ourselves be blown to bits as we approach the place."

"What sort of place?" I demanded.

"An old castle now belonging to an eccentric and exiled Austrian, Baron von Eckmohl," said the Spy Master. "It is near Langenargen, on the Lake of Constance. We ought to reach there well before daylight, since I know the way perfectly, and that will give me plenty of time to reconnoitre. Gregor Marcolos thinks to have stolen a march on me. He and others, I learned, are already visiting the old Baron, who is believed to have finished one of the greatest military inventions of the age. Marcolos will probably try to steal it and sell to the highest bidder. I expect to kill Marcolos and deal directly with Echmohl."

"What government are you representing?" I dared to ask, still suspicious of him in spite of his improved cordiality to me.

"I am first of all," he said grimly, "opposing Gregor Marcolos."

We had scarcely spoken of the fat Levantine plotter, Von Karl's secret service rival and inveterate adversary, since that terrible night of March 4th, when he had escaped from us in Strassburg. For a few anguished moments on the 5th I had believed Marcolos responsible for Diane's death, when it seemed the German authorities must have been warned that we were trying to rescue her and had advanced the hour of her execution. But reviving as I had in the strange sanitarium, to find her alive and safe and near me, all my enmity toward Marcolos had vanished. Indeed, I remembered him rather kindly, for while he had been captive and I down with influenza he had been both cook and nurse in our retreat, and had tended me with slovenly but faithful prudence. And now the great foes were to meet again, and Marcolos would be desperate, as Von Karl only five weeks before had completely humiliated him.

Through the April night we sped along. Von Karl treated all roads as if he had known them from boyhood. But I knew that he had a topographical instinct and in matters of this kind went to any trouble to prepare himself thoroughly.

It was after four o'clock when he stopped the car and said we were close to the river Argen, just beyond which lay the object of our quest. Petrol was precious in Germany, and hard to get without a government requisition; but the Spy Master had ready an extra can of it beneath the seat Diane occupied, and he now added that fifty liters to replenish the Panhard's tank supply. I was stiff and chill, but the air had braced me, and I no longer felt so weakened or slack from the effect of the drugs given me on the way from Strassburg or after reaching the sanitarium. We three walked about the car to limber up; and Von Karl seemed glad of my recovery, and bluntly explained why.

"Within the next forty-eight hours," he said, "a secret service battle, perhaps as momentous in effect as the Battle of the Marne, is going to be fought at Eckmohl's. He, of course, is a pawn, no matter what he may know about machines or explosives. I dare say every major combatant has by now pointed an agent toward the baron's castle. He was smart enough to conduct his experiments so close to Switzerland that the Allies also could reach him. You two," he ended, "have bravely represented France, and when the struggle begins, if you are able again to assist me, your aid will obligate me to share with the French government whatever new wonder of war I get control of. Do you agree?"

It seemed that we did. His proposal perhaps committed us to some atrocious piece of villainy, and he merely bound himself in return, should our joint efforts meet with his approval, to allow France to bid for this old baron's military invention when Von Karl had learned its secret and its value. However, Diane and I were helpless, and we knew it. I had not yet discussed with her what terms as to her future espionage activities had been exacted by the Spy Master as the price for his getting her out of Strassburg. But our immunity while continuing on German soil rested solely with Conrad von Karl.

He drove slowly until we had crossed the river and gone some little way beyond. Then he stopped, told us curtly to wait and be silent about it, and disappeared as he had done often before.

"KISS me," Diane whispered, as though I had to be urged, "and then we must forget we are in love, my dear."

I silenced her for a long moment, but then had to let her resume. "This," she warned me, "seems a more desperate business than anything he has led us into so far, and we have to keep together and be on our guard."

She insisted that we leave the car, for it was not at all concealed by the side of the road; and when I praised its friendly shelter, she reminded me Von Karl had said we might get ourselves blown to bits even in venturing near Eckmohl's place. Dawn was approaching and we had better not be exposed.

I said we ought to have followed Von Karl.

"He can always take care of himself," said she. "At least, he has left us the car. And if we really are near the Lake of Constance, I know all this countryside, too. I can drive us, if need be, to the Swiss border—and we'll trust to luck to get by the Bavarian guards."

When we had made ourselves safer, perhaps, but more uncomfortable, beside a great tree, we could dimly see the road and the car in the gradually bettering light. We both talked of quitting; but Von Karl had known we would not. Nothing really could have dragged us from that neighborhood until we had learned more about this coming trial of strength among the European secret services, with the Spy Master and Gregor Marcolos the chief contenders, and Eckmohl's deadly invention the prize.

We grew hungry. It was an hour past sunrise. At any moment we expected traffic along the road, discovery of the car and of us—rustic stares and inconvenient questioning. Diane, I knew, was growing worried; but she tried not to show it, and snuggled against me. Until suddenly she gripped my arm—the one not about her waist—and warned me silently. I also could hear voices now, not on the road but coming toward us from the wood at the edge of which we had waited.

There seemed to be two men speaking, in German and with no furtiveness. Indeed, they made a good deal of unnecessary noise in coming through the undergrowth on their way to the road. I recognized the voice of Conrad von Karl. And then I saw him, with a pair of companions—an old man, small and frail-looking and waspish, and a much younger one, heavy and sullen, who wore the Austrian reserve uniform and had his left sleeve pinned up in proof of war mutilation. Von Karl had taken off his heavy cloak, and he carried it nonchalantly over one shoulder. Diane and I were bewildered to see that he wore the field uniform of the German General Staff and to hear the old man call him "Colonel Bauer."

"And you say the baron has had guests?" the Spy Master queried.

"Yes, Colonel, a number in the past week," said the elderly one, whose voice was almost a chirp.

"And what did these ladies and gentlemen do?"

"That I cannot say, Colonel," he answered with a leer. "There was much wine and gaiety at night——"

"And Baron von Eckmohl?"

"His Excellency let them enjoy themselves. Why not—with so much grief and horror about——" The old fellow seemed to falter, and I saw the young one touch his arm—not tenderly, but mechanically, as though it were his job to contribute some odd warning or reminder.

VON KARL had now reached the Panhard and was looking about for us. Diane and I, by separate decision, at once came forward together, around the big tree and a pace or two—until he saw us. For an instant I thought anger glinted in his dark eyes; he resented our making any precautionary move without his order. But then he drew himself up and presented us, saying: "These are my companions, Fräulein Hertha and Herr Larsen."

To us he introduced the old man as "Josef, the majordomo of Baron von Eckmohl."

Josef greeted us with curious insolence, his small eyes dancing with what might have been cordiality but appeared to me much more like ridicule.

"This is Josef's nephew, Franz," said Von Karl. "A war hero, as you see," he added curtly.

The young Austrian nodded to us solemnly. The distinct truculence of his attitude had disappeared from the moment he gazed upon Diane in her boyish outfit of tan leather.

"We shall simply hide the car somewhere till dark," Von Karl was reflecting aloud. "I wish to avail myself of the postern you spoke of, my good Josef. The Baron will see me alone and immediately, I am sure, when he understands whom I represent."

What extravagant claim of authority he had set up, we, of course, could not guess. But Josef seemed only mildly impressed. He indicated a safe place for the Panhard—a stone shed not over a hundred meters from where we stood; but the track to it from the road was so indistinct that he and Franz had to guide Diane, who drove the car. From what I had heard of German staff colonels, it did not seem to me that Von Karl was being half as commanding with Eckmohl's servants as they must have expected. But his histrionic efforts were usually artful enough; and I was still so puzzled by our situation and stealthy arrival that I decided my limited duty was only to stay alert and ready to defend Diane and myself.

We had had no sleep, but my own fatigue was slight. Von Karl had driven the car for hours, but appeared as ever unwearied by the ordeal of the moment. And Diane was her wide-awake and smiling self.

"Fortunately I came to a lodge and there found the good Josef and Franz," Von Karl was explaining to us. There were signs that he had paid well for whatever it was the two had agreed to do for him.

"This way, Colonel," said Josef, interrupting with the utmost indifference to rank. There was something so extraordinary about the little old man — whether as the perfect majordomo of an eccentric nobleman and great inventor, or as a quaintly masked demon come out to lead us down to infernal adventurings—that I watched him with mingled dread and amusement.

He stalked away from the stone shed in which the car would spend the day and headed directly into the wood, but presently came to a path and followed it briskly, never once glancing back to see if we cared to use him as guide. This path, I surmised, was the same which he and Von Karl and the wounded Franz had lately traveled in coming through the wood to Diane and me. Whether it would bring us to Eckmohl's castle or only to the lodge which Von Karl had mentioned, I did not know. But I took as careful note as I could of the way, having no assurance that this same path might not mean escape and safety for us, should Von Karl's foes who had also come to treat with the inventive baron gain control of the situation.

AND then the castle! I saw it suddenly as the trees thinned and the ground became a smooth slope gently rising before us—a slope that would be a well-tended lawn by May. Of course, it was not really a castle. It did not suggest royal residence or a fortress with men-at-arms. Yet it had bulk and mien; it frowned and looked gray and old and feudal. Not precisely the workshop of a mechanical expert or chemical genius, true; but to a peculiar man of wealth and ideas a very inviting retreat.

"In here, if you please," said Josef.

He was ten paces ahead of Von Karl, with Franz next and Diane and me bringing up the rear. He had come to a high wall. He stood before a tiny iron door, and rapped sharply upon it; and the door swung open at once and as silently as mechanical perfection could contrive to make it.

III

JOSEF did not stand aside to let us pass. He stalked straight in and we followed him single file, Franz now being last. And then I noticed three things almost simultaneously—that we were not in a court-yard as I had expected; that Von Karl too was puzzled by this and had involuntarily reached toward his holster; and also, that Franz did not have to close the postern door. It closed as if of its own volition when the five of us had passed on in; and it closed noiselessly until it had shut tight, when a most emphatic click warned of its locking.

We stood uneasily in a narrow stone passage. Even Josef had paused and turned, as though he anticipated our urgent inquiry or protest. Von Karl spoke, but with neither anxiety nor anger. He affected to admire the little door which closed us in, and the strangely bright, yet not glaring lantern that illuminated our scant reception hall.

"Inventions of Baron von Eckmohl?" he said.

"Yes—the door, at least, is His Excellency's idea," said Josef, smirking. "Very ingenious, some say."

"And now, how soon may I see the Baron?" Von Karl demanded, perhaps for the first time addressing this bold little creature as a menial.

Josef heeded the tone. He bowed low.

"At once," said he. "Instantly, Colonel."

"You will take us to him?"

"I," said the majordomo, "am

Baron Josef von Eckmohl, at your service, Colonel Bauer."

Von Karl exhibited his best composure.

"So I understand," said he. "Your Excellency has doubtless enjoyed his masquerade."

"And how long am I supposed to enjoy yours, sir?" said Eckmohl. He had removed his nondescript hat and the antique cape-coat which he had worn as his own alleged servitor. Beneath this easy disguise he wore a clergyman's coat and waistcoat, and knee breeches that blended sartorially with high black gaiters. Yet he did not resemble any cleric I had ever seen, for his coat, waistcoat, and breeches were of crimson cloth.

Naturally we stared, and he relished our wonder.

"You think I am still masquerading," said he, "but you are entirely wrong. This is the undress field uniform of an atheist chaplain, attached to the army of the fools who kill each other, rather than their masters."

With an exasperated gesture he threw down his aged hat and cape-coat, and then stamped his foot. The stone floor opened and hat and coat vanished. Another blow with his foot, and the floor was well of its wound.

"A magician's paradise!" Von Karl observed.

Baron von Eckmohl wagged his hawk-like little head and giggled. "Be candid, and say—the rat-trap of a madman." But before we could reflect upon this sinister definition, he pursued: "And now, as to your being Colonel Bauer, a mere staff officer—why so modest? I assure you I prefer to entertain the field marshal of the spies, Conrad von Karl."

"I am flattered," said the Spy Master.

Diane and I had watched the duel between them from a singularly neutral position. And both of us—for we afterward compared notes—had the notion that Von Karl was not having the best of it. Eckmohl, with his hat and muffling coat aside, and despite the uniform he affected, reminded me of certain portraits I had seen of Frederick the Great. His features were sharp, his expression cunning and malevolent. His skin was wrinkled and dry—and, I thought, soiled. For all their solemn cut and splendid color, his garments were rumpled and unclean, his collar obscenely so.

"My dear Baron," Von Karl was saying, "since we now so happily understand each other, let us get to business. Of course, you know my errand?"

"I know your reputation, Conrad von Karl."

"As a spy and master of spies?'

"As one who tries to master all things," Eckmohl replied. "And so I have taken the necessary precautions. You have seen my smaller demonstrations——"

"The door, yes, and the trick of the stone floor that turns valet. When you have trained the ceiling to press and cleanse your clothing——" The elegant Von Karl paused, but his glance of deliberate contempt raked the other's untidiness.

"—but only my smaller demonstrations," the Baron proceeded. "I could strike you dead where you stand, man, and none would ever be the wiser."

It was really a portentous threat from such a wizard as Eckmohl; but Von Karl, with his poise and his mask of gay indifference—which made him a rallying point in any crisis—seemed to brush the little old man aside with a gesture of mock despair

"None would be the wiser?" he repeated. "You mean I should be dead and not even feel it?"

"Imbecile!" Eckmohl fairly shrieked at him. "If I could make you aware and afraid—— But no, you are the swaggering bravo, with a hide of hammered brass. Ten men perish and you get only a faint sensation of excitement!"

"Not even a faint one, Baron, unless I kill them myself," Von Karl took occasion to boast.

Whereupon the other raged at him, while Diane and I and the impassive Franz stood back and let the torrent of imprecation lash around us.

"Take care," jeered Von Karl. "If I spat upon you, Baron, you would suffer the double torment of bathing and drowning without any previous experience. But come," he exclaimed, "we both forget ourselves. There is a young lady present, and standing, while we brawl."

"You brought the hussy just to see you triumph," Eckmohl persisted with his venom. "I have heard that you insist upon spectators even for your own secret service."

"There are enemies of mine in this house," Von Karl said. "They seem to have kept you informed about me. I came here to deal with them and with you. Why not lead us on to the congress of conspirators?"

"I have led you on, Von Karl. I even knew you were bound to come if I welcomed some of them, such as that mammoth of gluttony, Marcolos," the inventor retorted.

SOMEWHERE at a distance a deep bell tolled.

We were startled; and Eckmohl giggled in a vicious treble. "That is the sign," said he. "I could not let them sleep and keep you waiting, Conrad von Karl. We are now all ready for the proof of force and the auction."

With these cryptic, threatful words he turned and walked away. By his unspoken invitation we all followed, along the narrow passage, and down a flight of twelve stone steps. Diane kept close by my side, and held my hand, and I thought I felt her shivering.

Assuredly there was cause to be unnerved. A damp, chill air now blew against us. We seemed to have entered a tunnel, with decidedly a downward slope beyond the steps. How far underground must we follow this crazy genius? And I noted, too, another of his mechanical conceits in the weird lighting that, as we moved along, made it bright where we were, but dark just ahead, and with darkness ever closing in behind us.

"Wait here, please!" said Eckmohl abruptly.

We had reached the tunnel's end and were standing in a kind of circular anteroom. He beckoned grotesquely to Franz, and the two of them went through a low and rounded door with the usual noiseless hinges, at the left.

Von Karl instinctively glanced up at the lantern over our heads. He drew his revolver. If our light failed, we would be comparatively helpless down here perhaps fifty feet underground. It was at this unfavorable moment that Diane and I discovered that we were unarmed; and Von Karl—to do him justice—took all the blame for the oversight.

Of course, he had come to conquer. But I think he had had no expectation of any trouble not of his ordering.

"Never mind," he said. "I'll do the fighting. Whatever happens, you two have no responsibility but each other."

However, the light did not dim.

Nothing assailed us, and in about five minutes Baron von Eckmohl reappeared. With a new ceremoniousness he invited us to enter.

AND so we came into the strangest cellar I ever expect to see, an immense vaulted chamber artificially and oddly lighted, with walls and curving roof of stone, and plain earth for its floor. At one side of a long platform there were seated nine men. The fat Marcolos I discerned at once by his ample outline, but it was some time before I recognized any of the others.

Franz appeared and stolidly ushered us to three camp chairs at the end of the platform. Von Karl's own appearance in this singular jury box, of course, created much stir. Marcolos half rose to his feet, as did the man next to him. The latter proved to be Kostoff, the Bulgarian, whom I had known at Du Parc's château in August, 1914.

"You gentlemen are not ready to meet yet," Baron von Eckmohl snapped. "Sit down, Marcolos, and gently—I have no more chairs conveniently at hand.

Marcolos obeyed with a grunt. There was a faint ripple of mirth at his expense and the tense situation cleared slightly. Kostoff resumed his seat. The Baron turned away, and we waited his pleasure.

Diane sat between Von Karl and me, with Von Karl at the end of the platform and a stranger seated on my left. I stole a glance at him and, despite his obvious intentions of disguise, I was certain I knew him—Carruthers, the British Secret Intelligence officer, with whom we had operated successfully in Paris during the Battle of the Marne. Here, at least, was a potential ally! I ventured to whisper his name; and though he did not turn his head or move, I felt sure he knew me, too, and that contact had been established.

"Stop whispering!" Eckmohl commanded, as though we were his class in school. "Franz!" he called.

And this was the signal for additional light. So that instantly we saw why we had been assembled down here.

At the other side of the chamber there was an earthen redout, now brilliantly revealed to us. It had been constructed to represent a small section of military trench—but not of the depth and strength already fashionable in France from the Swiss border to the Channel. And our view of it was from the flank, so that the machine-gun and the rifles on the parapet pointed away from us.

"NOW," exclaimed Eckmohl, his voice more than usually shrill, "you shall view my invention. But first, a word about the inventor. As some of you know, I was once a reputable magnate of Austria, received in Vienna, with two sons—two boys of mine in a crack hussar regiment." I saw him falter as he had done before, and again Franz touched him on the arm mechanically, by way of reminder. "Two cavalry officers, and also my sons," little Eckmohl continued in a hard tone. "War was declared against Serbia. Russia came in, then Germany—France! Europe went mad and murder was the vogue. And on the same day—on September the 3d, 1914—both of my sons, those two fine horsemen and troop leaders, were slain—blown to atoms, annihilated, as they chatted together, and by the same Russian shell, one of the few among many sent over that day which bothered to explode.

"Now, gentlemen, I did not blame the Russians, for were not our shells exploding with greater precision among their sons? No, I blamed the system which sends out men of flesh to stand against things of steel and fire and terrible force. Around Vienna, in the higher circles, I spoke my mind too freely. I was called a dangerous pacifist, and exiled—asked to live elsewhere, in seclusion, so that my insidious protests might not disturb the sleep of old men who had begun the war and had to manage it. I was excused, however, for they said that grief had made me mad.

"Mad—yes, and therefore able to see," he cried. "My sons were dead. I could not reconstruct their shattered bodies. But I could make bodies to replace other sons, and make these brutes of steel to stand against other steel—bullets and shrapnel and bayonets. I could do this—and I have done it! Behold!"

He knelt swiftly beside a large polished wooden case on the ground at his feet. He flipped up the lid of this, disclosing a baffling series of switches and controls. He manipulated these with the artistic flourish of a great musician; he was the organist now, not the unholy chapplain, and he played a most fantastic tune.

With a hum and clank there came up out of a hole at the rear of the earthwork—as from a dugout—four monstrous figures, hard and metallic and clumsy, and looking rather like deep-sea divers, with much of the sluggish mobility that the diver has under pressure of great sea depths. The four deployed into line, manning the trench—one taking control of the machine-gun, three seizing the rifles to repel a fancied attack. And there this queer and terrible squad of soldier-machines crouched and armed themselves, a show of unparalleled wonder, of Olympian fancy, of grim and subhuman horror.

"Fire!" screamed Eckmohl, working his switches.

The three rifles spoke, the machine-gun blazed furiously at the distant wall.

For all its size the majestic cellar room grew stifling and hazy with the acrid fumes of the gunpowder.

"Cease firing!" yelled the jubilant inventor. "Attention! Squad—*salute!*"

The steel brutes responded awkwardly, and the display of Eckmohl's genius thus ended on a comic note.

"NO MORE, I think, need be done to convince you that I have a revolutionary innovation here," said the Baron, standing up and facing us. "And no more," he went on, "will be shown to all of you. Details, plans, specifications for large scale production of my steel fighters, and all the rest of it, belong only to the winner among you."

"And your terms?" said Gregor Marcolos. "How are we to bid—or get an option, or whatever——"

"Wait," said Eckmohl. "Here are my terms—both maximum and minimum. One hundred thousand of these steel units can be manufactured in a year's time. One of them is the equal of at least eight soldiers on the defense. Say that they cannot attack—though I do not concede it—but counting the hundred thousand as purely defensive, they will replace and liberate eight hundred thousand other troops for a crushing attack. In short, the nation having my steel brutes wins the war—and, won, the war comes to an end, which is my only humane consideration. But all of this must transpire in secret. No news of the hundred thousand dare leak out till they take the field, a nearly invulnerable reserve.

"Therefore, I say that whichever among you buys my secret, to him all the rest of you belong. He may kill you here on the spot, or he may hold you captive for a year or more, till the hundred thousand are made ready. His is the secret, and nobody who knows even a small part of it—as you all now do—shall be free to spoil the surprise. I may add, gentlemen, that I despise you all. Spies and renegades and professional conspirators like you really provoked this war. It has amused me to entice you here, and I trust that the buyer of my brutes will let them practise shooting at the rest of you."

With this chilling hint he subsided.

"WELL, I represent Austria," Kostoff, the Bulgar, exclaimed, "so if you are a good Austrian, Baron——"

"I am a good Austrian—exiled," Eckmohl said bitterly.

"Then I can buy for Russia, and we will avenge your sons," another called out.

The little man's eyes danced with hate. "Don't any of you dare to speak of my sons!" he cried. "I debased them enough, mentioning them to such as you! Only because of them do I take money now. The war, my exile, and my experimenting have made me poor. Estates of mine in Galicia are ruined by the Russian invasion. And I mean to be rich again, so that I may found in a neutral state some vast and beautiful memorial to the two who were slain——"

"An idea worthy of their father, Baron," Conrad von Karl interrupted persuasively. "For my earlier rudeness, I crave your pardon." He was diplomacy itself when he chose. Eckmohl literally rubbed his eyes. "I acclaim you as a great man. And I am ready to buy at your price."

This started a fearful clamor. Eckmohl demanded silence and finally enforced it by threatening to have his mechanical troops swing the machine-gun round upon us.

"As to negotiation," he explained when he could, "you are, of course, each of you free to communicate with the group or government for which you are working. But that communication must be through me. I have a private wire. No codes or quibbles or trickery—no description of the secret mechanism—shall be possible. After a downbinder is paid to my bankers in Geneva, we will close a preliminary arrangement."

"Baron, I do not have to delay or communicate with anybody," Von Karl interrupted with his finest effrontery. "I will pay you, here and now, one million pounds sterling as a downbinder on your remarkable invention. I have with me the drafts to assign to you or your bankers. I make it a point to anticipate encountering such genius as yours."

"A million pounds!"

The bid repeated over and over fell among the others on our platform like a doom. But Kostoff and the rousing Marcolos combined together at once and commenced enlisting others—save the calm and silent Carruthers, my neighbor—in a league against the Spy Master.

As for Eckmohl, he chuckled with contemptuous glee. Clearly he did hate them all, and found more satisfaction in their plight and bickering than in his own prospect of sudden riches. But to me the whole bargain was reduced to an absurdity. Von Karl, I felt sure, had no million in cash to offer; and it was certain no group or government anywhere would spend a million pounds to buy a war secret of which it could get not even a telegraphic prospectus.

"But it is unfair," some quavering wretch protested. "You let Von Karl win before we are even able to bid—and he will surely kill us, as you said the winner ought to do."

"Unfair? Indeed?" sneered the Baron. "War is fair—professional spies are always fair. Only a madman is unfair. Well, so be it. I dislike Herr von Karl myself, intensely, but I note that he is a giant compared to you—you other bacteria. If he has his million pounds here, then he simplifies everything for me, eh, Franz?" And for the first time even the one-armed soldier showed emotion.

IV

"THERE is but one point on which I seek enlightenment, Baron," said Von Karl. "You have said your steel men are nearly invulnerable. Can you prove it?"

"Only a direct hit from artillery will destroy them."

"Wait!" said Von Karl, standing. He had drawn his revolver. "At this short range, a steel-nosed bullet striking between steel plates," he reflected, taking very careful aim—"well, if it does not penetrate——"

Both Eckmohl and Franz exclaimed in protest.

Von Karl ignored them and swept the muzzle of his gun slowly from one figure to the next, choosing a target. And then a figure swayed. The brutes had nerves, after all—and not of steel. Von Karl laughed aloud.

"As I feared, Baron. There are live men inside those machines of yours," said he. "You put on a good show, but your talent is misdirected. No doubt you expected to defraud me and then have your maniac revenge upon the lot of us, enticed here—and cleverly, too—by rumors of your wondrous discovery."

Eckmohl seemed to be strangling on his own wrath and discomfiture. Von Karl stepped down from the platform, revolver held at ease. The scar on his cheek was livid, and I knew the strain he endured, alert and dominant as he was in that vast chamber where only two of us were safely his supporters. Yet none spoke and no hand was raised to challenge him. The always asthmatic breathing of Marcolos was the only sound.

Von Karl, it seemed to me, meant to reach the machine-gun and then assume control in deadly earnest.

"We may still undertake certain festivities," said he, walking slowly toward the redout. "This is a spot so secluded, I could not have ordered it better. In fact, Baron, I like your castle, as you call it, and I think I shall accept it from you presently as a gift."

Eckmohl found his voice at last and cursed the Spy Master.

Von Karl gave a bound, clearly intending to leap upon the parapet and seize the machine-gun and swing it around to daunt the crowd of them. It might have been more wise of him to have had Diane and me cover his charge. But the spectacular was dear to him, and overwhelming fifteen adversaries was just the sort of feat his ego greedily consumed. However, the earth thrown up to form the sample breastwork was softer than it appeared to be. Von Karl's feet slipped; he sank in above the ankles. His balance was bad, and he spread his arms to improve it. And then Franz, Eckmohl's trusty bodyguard, sprang at him and pulled him down with one hand, Von Karl's revolver exploding harmlessly as he fell.

Franz dropped upon him. But Von Karl would have mastered the soldier if two of Eckmohl's machine-men, partly disencumbered, had not dropped down from the redout and added their weight to the struggle. Von Karl they stretched out, bound and helpless. It was over before Diane or I could make a move. And since we were without weapons ourselves, there would have been small chance of our averting disaster in any case.

"Don't kill him! Save him!" Eckmohl raved at his men, who seemed to obey him with a really machine-like precision, so long had he rehearsed them in the performance we had seen. "Now we'll have festivities!" he shrieked. "I lose the money, but we can rid the earth of all these spying, plotting vermin."

HE GLOATED and chattered like an ape in his excitement, so suddenly had fortune favored him again. Marcolos, Kostoff, and the others on the platform evidently had been disarmed before being admitted to the secret exhibition. The baron chuckled over this, and kept warning us that the four men with rifles and bayonets were army deserters he had sheltered, who owed him everything and would do whatever he commanded. And with very evil phrases he promised his squad its evil reward. Five women guests it seemed, had not been disturbed so early to come to the cellar. When their male associates had been slaughtered—an intention he vividly advertised—these ladies would be persuaded to remain, he said, and cherish Franz and the ex-machines who had deserted from Austro-Hungarian regiments.

Eckmohl chirped obscenely, and then began eagerly to marshal us into line. When he came to Diane, who had kept close beside me, he paused.

"You are a girl," he said, his bony and unclean hand plucking at the collar of her leather coat. "A spy, too, I dare say. But so pretty I can forgive you even that. You need not die, my dear. Become my guest here—a pleasanter prospect, eh?" he urged. "You may stand aside."

Diane ignored her special immunity.

"I am with him, we stay together," she said, nodding toward me. "And let me tell you, Baron, he is an American. You will do well to remember that." She held fast to my arm.

"Good! I even bag an American," the crazy nobleman giggled. "One of the munitions-making profiteers, I hope. Son of a millionaire, perhaps?"

But from me his roving attention was distracted to Marcolos, who seemed to be finding it hard to breathe.

"He will die before we can finish him," Eckmohl complained. "Here—it is exercise he needs." He sped over to the trench and returned with a spade. "Stick him with your bayonet if he does not dig," he commanded one of his men. And to Marcolos he gave fiendishly explicit instructions for digging his own grave.

The fat Levantine began to whimper, but the bayonet made him dig.

"Does it seem so unfair to you?" Eckmohl mocked. "Well, you do have to dig twice as much as these others. But you should have thought of that when you saw yourself getting so fat. Dig now—don't pretend you are sick. You won't have time to die of any sickness."

And so he raved on, while the four deserters whose loyalty he had attached backed him up and made the scene a fearfully realistic nightmare. Some others he put to digging graves for themselves. But then he changed his mind and began experimenting with new humiliations; and much was said and done down there in the next ten minutes that I wish might be erased from my mind. Through it all Diane never faltered or lost her defiant courage. Eckmohl might cow the rest, but he had no power to make her leave me, nor could I myself persuade her, in view of the brutal and vicious assistants of the madman, who stood around, pointing their rifles at me and leering at my beloved.

As best we could, she and Carruthers and I kept a little apart.

"Somebody's nerve will break," the British agent whispered. "There will be a riot, and then—our only chance."

HOWEVER, Eckmohl himself seemed to weary of his gruesome sport.

"Stand them all up and shoot them with the machine-gun," he decided judicially. "After all, torture is inhuman—and we haven't had any breakfast, men."

So the ruffians agreed, Franz hanging back a little dubiously, I thought. They unbound Von Karl so that he could be placed in the rank of the condemned. But, to my amazement, the Spy Master showed abject terror. He would not rise. He groveled and pleaded and tried to buy his life from a maniac who obviously doted upon slaying him.

Surprised and jubilant, Eckmohl came to stand over the craven intriguer, to taunt him maliciously and kick him like a cur. But Von Karl, who was prostrate, had really no fear. His hand shot out and he seized the other's ankle. A single gesture, and he was on his knees. Eckmohl's leg he had snapped like a whip—I heard the bones splintering and the lunatic shriek in agony.

Von Karl then rose to his feet and Eckmohl was like a brittle pulp in his hands. The Spy Master flung the baron straight out ahead of him, till the bayonet of one of his own rogues pierced him through. Screaming and dying, the vile little man acted as the buffer Von Karl required. In another half instant the latter had dragged his own revolver from Eckmohl's belt, left him still grasping the rifle that could not be discharged, and had turned and fired twice, hitting Franz in the face and dropping the other deserter nearest to himself.

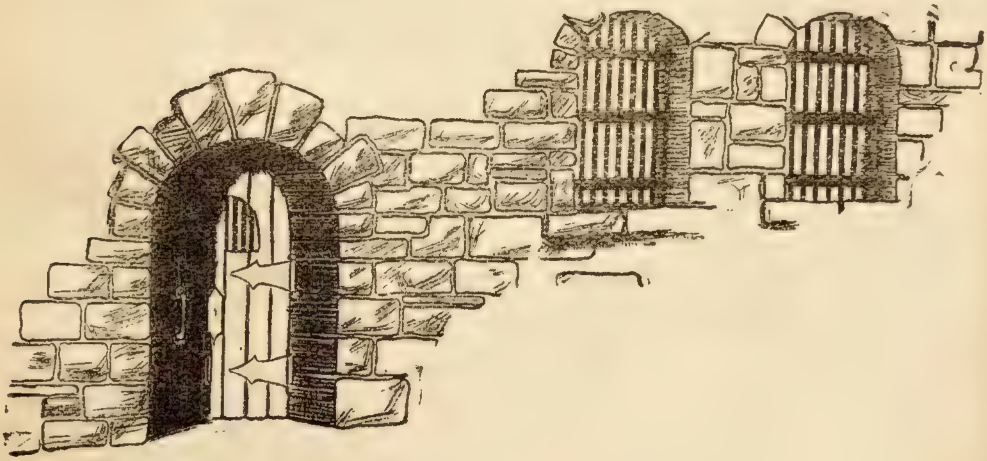
Shots and yells and a most appalling conflict now surged across that vaulted chamber already acquainted with more than enough of bloodshed and abomination. I stood in front of Diane, waiting for a chance to arm myself. I saw one of Eckmohl's deserters bayonet Gregor Marcolos through the throat, and then Kostoff and two others killed the fellow with only their hands against his blade and rifle. Carruthers bumped into me, both hands badly cut; but he had secured a rifle and a bayonet, and I recalled seeing him kicking and struggling to get them from a dying man who seemed to hope for one final shot.

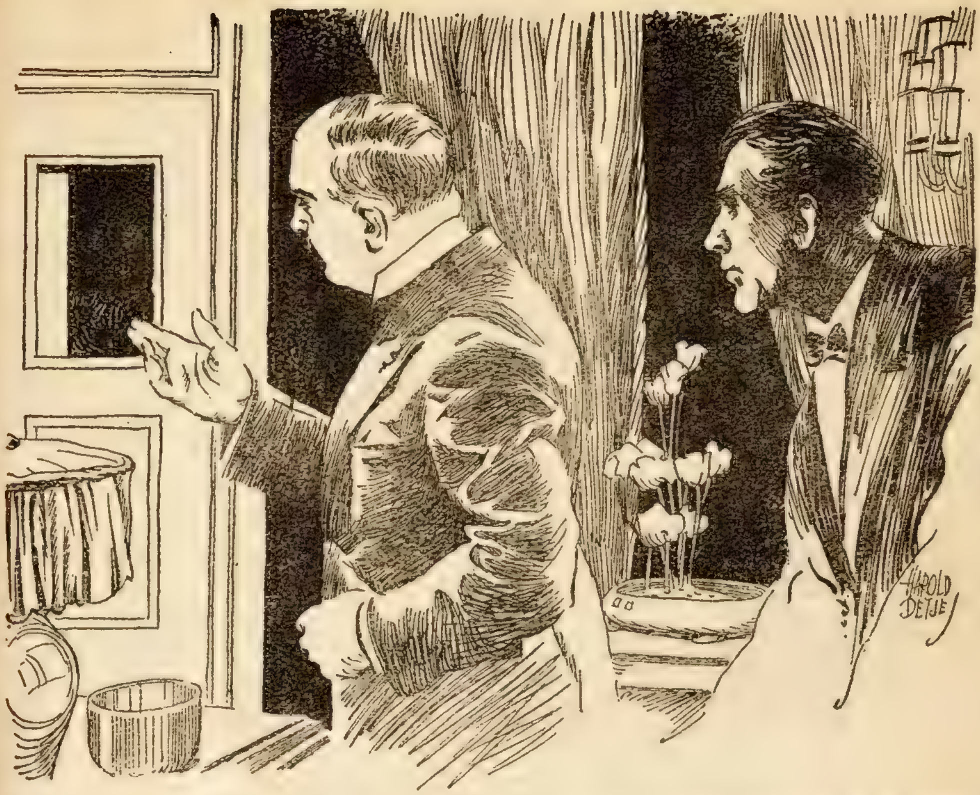
DIANE pointed out that Von Karl was standing against odds. Carruthers gave me his bayonet, and we three circled the mêlée and then charged in to rescue the Spy Master, who deserved better than to have to fight off alone the remnant of Marcolos' following. And in this foray I had the ill luck to be struck on the side of the head with a rifle butt.

It did not knock me out, but thereafter I was more of a burden and less of a vengeful flame to our side. I can recall a tedious and painful retreat through the weird tunnel, up the stone stairs I had counted, and then the delay while the mechanism of the postern was uncovered. By mutual superhuman effort we four at last came to the Panhard in the remote stone shed. But here Carruthers, with a bullet in the shoulder, collapsed from loss of blood. His pluck had held till we reached the car; but now his weakness and failing to revive troubled us through all the rest of the day.

My own bump, if sickening still, seemed superficial. Yet I could not be trusted to steer the car, and Diane could not do it, with three fingers of her right hand fractured. Von Karl had a bullet furrow across his scalp, and unnumbered gashes and bruises. But if we were to start by nightfall he would have to drive—and he did.

There was still great danger for us in this locality, even though the carnage at Eckmohl's might not be immediately reported to the German authorities. Diane—holding a rifle she could not shoot—took her regular turn with Von Karl and me in staying awake and on watch at the shed, where we waited till dusk. I vaguely remember our start, a slender meal, and an endless motor journey. Von Karl was surgeon, chauffeur, and bold forager for petrol and the food and stimulants we had. My head ached abominably; and, strange though it afterward appeared, I neither protested nor felt dismay when I heard him say we should have to return to the Lorrach sanitarium, where I had recently been a very dissatisfied patient—or prisoner.





"I have observed," he said profoundly, "that if you wish things done well, it is wisest to do them yourself."

The Great Canal Street Jewel Robbery

By MURRAY LEINSTER

The great Napoleon of Crime was willing enough to take whatever medicine was coming to him with good grace—but he was astute enough to have the dose accurately measured.

I

DOWN on Canal Street—not knowing the inwardness of the matter—they still speak of the robbery with bated breath. Samuel Winterberg is rather a hero. Detective Gleason is revered. The firm of Goldberg, Gatz & Company has had much advertising from the affair. Even Patrolman Maginty is pointed out to sightseers by persons familiar with the legends of the district.

Every one even remotely connected with it has his niche assured in the Canal Street Hall of Fame, with but a single exception. And that exception is all-important. The one person of whom Canal Street is entirely ignorant is that short, stout, astute arch-criminal whose biography I am privileged to write—the Napoleon of Crime.

While I was in conference with him upon the outlines of his biography, the question of the Canal Street Jewel Robbery arose. I remember that we were seated in his splendidly appointed study in his apartment on Riverside Drive.

"But shall I put that in?" I asked. "After all, there are people who——"

"Include it," he said firmly, with a decisive wave of his pudgy hand. "It is essential to the understanding of my career. The results were insignificant, in a monetary sense, but it promoted to a large degree the growth of what I might almost call 'company loyalty' among my subordinates. Include it."

AND so I set down upon paper for the first time the true history of the Great Canal Street Jewel Robbery, which is a legend about the base of the Williamsburg Bridge, and which throws so much light upon the intellect of that genius who came to be termed by his confederates "the Napoleon of Crime."

Not all of Canal Street, of course, cherishes the tradition of the crime. The wholesale-fabric section knows nothing about it at all. The elevator-machinery block is similarly ignorant. Even the ribbons-and-hat-trimmings has heard but vaguely, while the girl-wanted-on-feathers-apply-third-floor *quartier* is not interested in jewels.

The fame of the great robbery begins just where the electric automobile, patented, which runs fifty-five miles on one charge, is displayed in a fly-specked window. From there it waxes greater through the cut-glass-and-plated-ware district, and runs almost to the end of the wholesale-and-retail-clothing area, where smiling and persuasive shirt-sleeved gentlemen lurk spiderwise in plate-glass vestibules to lure wary and argumentative customers into their shops. It runs south perhaps one block and perishes among the traffic, but goes north fully two blocks from Canal Street to Grand.

On Grand Street, especially, the fame of the robbery is widespread. The passers-by gaze with more than usual interest when Samuel Winterberg strolls casually into the Imperial Motion Picture Palace, a plump-cheeked damsel on his arm. It is not unusual for his entrance to distract attention even from the screen upon which that sterling states-rights picture, "She Didn't Want to, but She Did," is being shown.

But it is, after all, on that narrow and nondescript little street between Canal and Grand that voices are hushed when Samuel approaches. Men stop their speech and look at him. He saunters up and is greeted with respect. Often they are tongue-tied until some one more assured than the rest will say:

"Any more robbers hangin' around, Mr. Winterberg?"

Then there is a slightly nervous smile until Samuel's tolerant grin relieves the tension. If the first man to speak is sufficiently intimate with Samuel to call him "Sam," he shares in some of the glory.

I AM sorry that I cannot name this street on which the fame of the robbery reaches its height, but it is exactly midway between Grand

Street and Canal, and you may know it by the fact that there are two clothing stores on the block just off the Bowery, where the good old custom of "Take-me-home-for-three-dollars-and-a-half" is kept up. You will also notice, if you look carefully, a number of gentlemen of Samuel's own occupation engaged in earnest conversation. They foregather in convenient doorways, sometimes three or more, but usually only two. One of them will be holding a sheet of immaculate white note-paper in his hand and he will be talking fervently. The other will probably have a tiny pair of tweezers in his hand and will be scrutinizing something in the paper. Usually his air is of doubt or discouragement, though sometimes he grows as impassioned as the man with the note-paper. If you approach closely, you may see what the paper contains, but it is unlikely that you will catch more than a glimpse of incredibly brilliant stones sending out tiny sparkles of vastly greater vividness than the dingy sunlight that strikes them. The stones are diamonds. The men are jewel dealers. And that is Samuel's profession.

Having the major part of my information from the Napoleon of Crime himself, I cannot tell you why somewhat shabby gentlemen elect to do business in precious stones on the public street or in the quick-lunches. My informant does not know, but in the course of a day spent in gathering material for the biography of that arch-criminal, I saw stones change hands in the doorway of a shoe shop; beneath a dangling duck suit which would delight any child's heart for a dollar seventy-five; and in a slightly dingy lunch-room where a benevolent waiter wished me a good appetite in Yiddish as I attacked my food.

The jewel dealers who depend upon eloquence and low prices to sell their wares congregate between Canal and Grand Streets. I do not know why. It is as mysterious as the grouping of silk fabrics on Fourth Avenue in the thirties, and the compacting of all the wholesale florists in the world on Twenty-eighth Street near Seventh Avenue. Further, I do not even understand to whom these stones eventually find their way. As nearly as I can learn, all the gentlemen of Samuel's profession make their livings selling diamonds to each other, and, though it seems economically unsound, I pass on the problem with a shrug as nearly like that of the astute arch-criminal as I can compass.

HE dismisses the subject with a negligent wave of his well-manicured, if slightly pudgy, hand.

"I leave matters of that sort to my subordinates," he said carelessly, when I asked him. "I make the greater plan, let them work out the details, and then examine the whole and arrange for its execution. But for an executive to—ah—go into such minute details interferes with his view of the larger aspects of crime. The larger aspects," he repeated impressively. "This is an age of executives, of men who can take a vision and transform it into a reality. One should never allow anything to interfere with one's executive vision, even in crime. A grasp of essentials, in the executive, a grasp of details in the subordinate. That is the formula for successful coöperation."

He leaned back in his chair and fell into the frowning brown study that makes his resemblance to the original Napoleon so marked. There is not a little physical resemblance between the two men, leaving aside the genius that flamed and flames from the Napoleon of France and Crime, respectively. Both short, both rather chubby—the subject of my biography tends to trot a little when he is in a hurry—and both with nearly identical mannerisms. One might even say that the modern genius is even more like his prototype than his prototype was like himself. The library of Napoleana the subject of my biography placed at my disposal enabled me to verify the likeness with remarkable success.

But whereas Bonaparte was a man of obscure but discoverable origin, the modern Napoleon is a man of mystery. He has confided nothing whatever to me. Evidently cultured, obviously wealthy in his own right, the member of such exclusive clubs as the Ohio Society and the National Geographic, and until recently a member of the Wholesale Merchants Association, it seems incredible that he should be a master mind of crime. Some time in the past, he has hinted, a tragedy turned him from the way of righteousness. Some intolerable wrong transformed his very being, and from a conservative and right-thinking member of society he became its most relentless enemy. He has waged war upon society since that unknown tragic moment, and it is with his consent that I inform the world of the keen intelligence that fights it, of the cool deliberation and exact science that prepare and execute his raids upon the treasuries of honest men.

The Great Canal Street Jewel Robbery is a case in point.

"It was merely an inspiration," he said carelessly. "I had crossed the Williamsburg Bridge and arrived in New York. The glint of crystal in a store-window set my mind at work. My chauffeur had turned north and was making his way up the Bowery in a sea of traffic. And then, from the window of the limousine, I saw two men talking upon the sidewalk. One of them moved his hand and there was the sparkle of gems, unset gems, within his palm. It was enough. In a matter of minutes the plan had been conceived, reviewed, altered, and had taken its final form. And the result was the Canal Street Robbery."

And from here, at the risk of seeming incoherent, I think it wisest to tell what happened from the standpoint of one who merely observed irrelevant happenings in the order of their occurrence.

II

THE Williamsburg Bridge takes rise in Brooklyn, which it spurns with infinite grace. It rises in a magnificent arch, supported by a lace-like web of cables, sweeps high above the placid river and the busy, puffing tugs upon it, descends graciously, and seems to hover a moment before alighting where a triple arch waits to greet it. The arch is of gray stone and perfect proportions, pierced to take the three classes of surface traffic, and is set within a little park completely floored over with concrete. There is something Grecian in the arch and the park, and there are inscriptions in Doric lettering upon the bases of the finely modeled pillars of the archway. It seems appropriate that there should be inscriptions there, and it is a kindly thought to place them about the bases, where the passing multitude can absorb words of wisdom with the greatest convenience. Doubtless thousands every day read the inscriptions painted in severely plain print upon the stone of the gem-like arch, and ponder upon them in moments of leisure. The inscriptions are all alike. They read: "POST NO BILLS."

Canal Street forms the northern border of the park. The Bowery is its western front. Within its concrete environs the habitués of Canal Street eat their humble sandwiches. This is the very heart of the wholesale-and-retail-clothing section, with the cut-glass-and-plated-ware tucked neatly in two hundred yards of pavement. Upon the Bowery, some three doors from Canal, there is a quick-lunch where Samuel Winterberg lunches. In fair weather he sometimes strolls to the park, instead, and indulges in a cheese sandwich.

There he may gaze upon the traffic, or upon Patrolman Maginty, or upon any of a number of equally decorative adjuncts to the locality. Now, he sometimes looks into the window of Goldberg, Gatz & Company, but before the robbery it must be admitted that the window hardly attracted his attention. It is probable, though, that the window of Goldberg, Gatz & Company contained the glint of crystal which inspired the genius of the Napoleon of Crime, because that store fronts upon the park, and its glittering array of cut glass and guaranteed-for-a-lifetime silver can be seen for an almost indefinite distance. That particular spot is, indeed, an ideal location for such goods, though no one but a madman would try to sell haberdashery or confectionary or—or anything, in fact, but cut glass and guaranteed-for-a-lifetime silver there. The gods of the market-place have elected that such and such things shall be sold in this place and such-and-such in that. In this case, Goldberg, Gatz & Company obey the edict and sell the ordained articles with eloquence, price-shaving, and much histrionic despair.

To them, however, upon a certain June morning, there came a young man with the indescribable air of one to whom graft is the normal and the customary thing. At a guess, from the air referred to, one would place him as a chauffeur. He interviewed Abram Goldberg on the subject of subletting a window for the demonstration of a vacuum cleaner. Ignoring altogether the utter inappropriateness of the location for such a showing, he let it be seen that he was but the agent hiring the window, and not at all a person to whom the cost mattered greatly. Once this disclosure was made, a highly confidential interview ended with Mr. Goldberg rubbing his hands and the chauffeur-like person separating a roll of bills into two sections before replacing the residue in his pockets.

A REPORT was promptly made to the Napoleon of Crime, whose chauffeur had acted as agent for a mythical vacuum cleaner company.

"The first part of the task had been accomplished," as he so truly remarks. "It only remained to carry out the plan. Perseverance is essential to success of any sort."

And he gave instructions for the purchase of a number of vacuum cleaners and the erasure of their trade-mark name, with the substitution of another and entirely fictitious factory and brand.

The net result was that in the midst of Canal Street's strictly specialized commerce an alien industry took its stand. One-half of the display space of Goldberg, Gatz & Company was taken up by a series of placards expounding the virtues of the Kleenrite Vacuo Renovator. Three vacuum cleaners stood impressively in view of the passers-by, and a stolidly calm girl with streaky, honey-colored hair chewed gum in bovine contentment while she strewed dust upon a rug, cleaned the rug with the vacuum cleaner, and strewed dust upon it again.

Now and then she looked at her wrist-watch, and promptly at twelve o'clock she retired for lunch. She was back shortly after one and resumed her task, strewing dust with a lavish hand, placing the tube of the cleaner upon the dust, and watching the gray smudge vanish. She performed the task irreproachably. Now and then she paused to change her gum from one side of her mouth to the other, or to expose a fresh placard praising the Kleenrite Vacuo Renovator. Otherwise she worked steadily. As she scattered dust upon the rug, she chewed phlegmatically. As the vacuum cleaner inhaled it, she chewed apathetically. She was admirable. She was conscientious and she was industrious, and though her eyes were vacant and she seemed to be thinking, if at all, of other and doubtless higher things, she was the perfect pattern of the window-demonstrator.

III

EXPLAINING the matter to me for the purpose of his biography, the Napoleon of Crime put the tips of his fingers together and gazed at me gravely.

"I have observed," he said profoundly, "that if you wish things done well, it is wisest to do them yourself. Even the executive must often descend to details when those details are of vast importance. In this case, I sent my valet to purchase a comb, but I thought it best to take it down to Canal Street myself, running the risk of having myself noted, in order to be assured that the matter was properly attended to."

He rose and trotted across the room in which we sat—a splendidly furnished library. A magnificent carved table stood beside the chair in which he had been sitting, and as he paused before a panel in the wall his feet were resting on a rug that had once been the coming-out costume of a débutante tigress. We were in the arch-criminal's Riverside Drive apartment, surrounded by luxury, protected by the law, secure from all intrusion and investigation.

The panel slipped to one side, and he returned with something in his hand. It was a side-comb or some similar article, made out of excellent imitation tortoise-shell, and with an elaborate filigree design in metal upon the upper part, where there were settings for an infinitude of gems. Every one of the settings was empty, however, when the comb was extended for my inspection.

"This," he informed me, "was an essential to my plot. In fact, it was the crux of the matter. It cost me thirteen dollars and eighty-seven cents."

Among the qualities of the great law-breaker is a capacity for remembering infinitesimal details, even those he leaves to his subordinates to carry out. Recalling the price of the comb was a case in point. Only a genius could have the grasp, both of essentials and of details, that characterizes the Napoleon of Crime. Let me give an example of his terse, lucid style in explaining an involved point in the Canal Street robbery.

"I WENT to Canal Street," he told me gravely, "carrying the comb. I removed my spats and donned spectacles instead of the pince-nez I habitually wear. I also had provided myself with a soft felt hat. It did not take me long, in this guise, to make myself known as a country jeweler, from a small town, in search of jewels with which to complete an order for a client. I had the comb in my hand. I explained that an eccentric customer wished stones to replace the original gems, which had been of inferior quality, and that I was in quest of a merchant who could supply them. It was remarkable with what eagerness they fastened themselves upon me. They did not know with whom they had to deal."

He paused and thoughtfully examined the comb again. He sighed faintly.

"There was one man, a certain Samuel Winterbottom — no, Winterberg—who offered to have the stones ready for my inspection on the following day. We went into an execrable restaurant, and he examined the settings and listed the number and sizes of the stones I required. I let myself appear gullible as to prices—it did not matter to me, of course, what prices he was to charge —but was keenly insistent upon having the stones of good quality and utterly without defect. I recall that he allowed me to pay for lunch. He seemed in high spirits when we parted, although he had admitted that he would have to strain his credit to the utmost to secure the gems I would require. As a matter of fact, he explained, the stones would have to be paid for with the currency I paid him. In consequence he asked that I be prepared to pay spot cash for them. I was glad to agree to that, for a reason you will readily understand."

The Napoleon of Crime made his preparations with infinite care. He arranged to meet Samuel Winterberg in the doorway of Goldberg, Gatz & Company, at a few minutes after one on the following day. And then he returned to his limousine, resumed his spats and his pince-nez, and enjoyed an excellent dinner. All was in train for the *coup*.

IV

NEXT morning Patrolman Maginty, instead of being at the bottom of the sea as his name would suggest, was merely on duty at the foot of Canal Street. And he was, one surmises, very much bored by the fact. He found his beat tiresome, the day hot, and would have appreciated some sort of moisture; if not sea-water, then the type of humidity advocated by the wetter political candidates. He was, in short, very much the usual sort of policeman. sea-water, then the type of humidity he saw the accident.

A roadster, a snappy roadster with an entirely fictitious license number attached, came up the Bowery at a reasonable speed. Patrolman Maginty paid no attention to it. He did not notice that at the wheel of the roadster was a young man with the peculiar and indescribable air of one to whom graft is the usual and normal thing. He surely did not suspect that the driver of the snappy roadster was the chauffeur of the Napoleon of Crime, nor that the coming of the car was a part of the carefully timed and carefully planned *coup* of the master-mind of criminality.

Patrolman Maginty gazed into the window where the demonstrator of the Kleenrite Vacuo Renovator had been on duty. This was her lunch hour, and the window was empty. Only the perfectly renovated rug on which she worked lay upon the floor, and the various vacuum cleaners stood about the display-space. It was, in a way, a rather pathetic void into which the policeman gazed. He was a sentimental soul, and the honey-colored hair of the demonstrator had made him pause more than once. He admired her hair. He admired the method by which she alternately besmirched and renovated the inoffensive rug. Perhaps he admired the rhythm with which she chewed gum. But she was absent. Patrolman Maginty passed on.

Four seconds after he had left the spot, the red roadster left the pavement, plowed across the sidewalk, and came to rest with a crash in the ruins of the plate-glass window. The sidewalk was spattered with fragments of broken glass. The air grew foggy with sulphurous comments made by the driver of the car. In an instant more the street resounded with the shrill complaints of the firm of Goldberg, Gatz & Company over the calamity that had befallen it.

PATROLMAN MAGINTY returned. He absorbed the semaphoric remarks of Abram Goldberg and grew serious. He heard the wildly gesticulated complaint of Isaac Gatz and grew severe. He turned to the young man, who swore at his luck, his machine, and the two partners, and reached significantly toward his pocket. Patrolman Maginty grew benign again.

Five minutes later the car had been backed out of the wreckage it had created and Patrolman Maginty had the name and address of the young man, likewise his license number. Patrolman Maginty was not to be blamed if he later, quite unexpectedly, found a twenty-dollar bill in the pocket of his uniform coat, nor if the name and address eventually proved to be imaginary, nor if the license number on investigation proved to be that of the perfectly innocent flivver of an indignant reverend gentleman living in Yonkers. None of these things were Patrolman Maginty's fault. They were due to the planning of that astute arch-criminal, the Napoleon of Crime.

When the honey-haired damsel of the vacuum renovators returned to her work at one o'clock she found herself masticating in the open air, strewing a rug with dust and renovating it again without protection from the elements. She contemplated the situation with utter calmness. She set to work with that methodical abstraction which is the mark of the perfect window-demonstrator.

V

THE near-riot that was the climax of the *coup* was no more and no less than had been anticipated by the Napoleon of Crime. He was envisioning it even as he toddled toward the meeting-place, his feet slightly chilly without their accustomed spats, and his nose and ears somewhat uncomfortable from the spectacles he had assumed in his guise of a country jeweler. As he went toward the doorway of Goldberg, Gatz & Company, he observed that everything had worked out in accordance with his plan. In his pocket he had a large sum in currency, supposedly to pay for the jewels Samuel Winterberg was to provide, but actually as evidence in his favor when the anticipated fracas took place. The window of Goldberg, Gatz & Company was broken. The phlegmatic window-demonstrator was at her task. A third arrangement the Napoleon of Crime had planned was also ready to function. And Samuel Winterberg was waiting for him.

The matter moved swiftly. They met. The Napoleon of Crime displayed his credentials—a thick wad of banknotes. Samuel Winterberg displayed his jewels in an immaculate sheet of white note-paper. The Napoleon of Crime drew out the comb in which they were to fit. He took the jewels into his hand, still in their note-paper. Like all great crimes, in its actual working-out the thing was simplicity itself.

A limousine, apparently stalled on the further side of the pavement, suddenly began to backfire with terrific violence. The sound was precisely that of a machine-gun in action. Indeed, Louis Cohen, who had served a year in France with the Fighting Quartermasters, declared later that he dived into his store in instinctive search of his weapons and gas-mask. The backfiring was so violent and prolonged that every one in hearing turned to look. And in that instant the Great Canal Street Jewel Robbery became a fact.

The shift of attention lasted only for a matter of seconds. In five seconds—ten at most—all Canal Street had lost interest and was going about its business, not even pausing to note that the limousine regained its normal purring and moved slowly out of sight. But in those five or ten seconds the thing had been done.

THE Napoleon of Crime was staring with every evidence of stupefaction at the paper in his hand. It was empty. Samuel Winterberg stared at it, glanced instinctively at the pavement, and then yelled:

"Where's them stones? Hey, where's them stones?"

"I'm sure I don't know," said the Napoleon of Crime mildly. "I had them a moment ago, but now they're gone."

"Oy! Police! Police!" Samuel Winterberg seized the Napoleon of Crime and howled. Patrolman Maginty appeared. Likewise, and magically, appeared Detective Gleason, off duty and in plain clothes.

There was nothing they could do. The Napoleon of Crime displayed intense indignation and readily consented to be searched. The search revealed nothing. Samuel Winterberg ceased momentarily to be a one hundred per cent American and wept in his despair, calling upon Heaven to witness that the diamonds that had vanished were worth twenty thousand dollars and that he was ruined. And then a divine thought occurred to him. They had been in the hands of his customer when they disappeared. In strict point of law they were in the customer's custody and the customer was responsible for them. He demanded payment for the stones from the Napoleon of Crime. That gentleman calmly refused, saying with perfect correctness that he had not accepted them, but had merely been examining them, and that being in the presence of the owner and title not having passed, they were as much in the custody of Samuel Winterberg as if they had been in Samuel Winterberg's hypothetical store.

Detective Gleason scratched his chin and went out into the street. He surveyed the scene of the disappearance. The doorway before the store of Goldberg, Gatz & Company. A window broken. A honey-haired damsel chewing thoughtfully, her mind upon other and higher things, while she alternately soiled and cleaned a rug fresh from the age-old looms of Smyrna, Illinois. Detective Gleason thoughtfully stripped the tinfoil from the end of a five-cent pack of peppermint lozenges. He put the first in his mouth and went meditatively back to the store, where Samuel Winterberg and the Napoleon of Crime alike awaited him in Patrolman Maginty's custody.

"Send for th' wagon, Maginty," said Detective Gleason succinctly. "I've found the stones."

VI

THE Napoleon of Crime, in giving me the data on the Canal Street

Robbery, has explained himself carefully.

"One's failures," he said profoundly, "are often as important as one's successes. I have told you of the Canal Street matter because it was one of my first exploits. It was not a wasted effort. It taught my organization the value of the closest coöperation. It taught them that loyalty to each other and to me was the best policy in the end. It gave them, in fact, an *esprit de corps*, a 'company loyalty' that has proven invaluable. And it taught me that Detective Gleason was a man worthy of respect, a foeman worthy of my steel. Henceforth, he and I would be enemies."

The Napoleon of Crime fell into a reverie, with his hands folded across his slightly protruding waistcoat. His eyes bulged slightly, as they always do when he is intent.

"At the station-house," he said tersely, "they searched the three vacuum cleaners. They found the gems in one of the dust-boxes, just where they had gone when Tillie—she's one of the housemaids, perhaps you've seen her—reached out the nozzle of the cleaner while every one's attention was diverted by the backfiring of my limousine. It had been placed there for the purpose of creating a diversion."

He sighed slightly.

"A station-house is a singularly unpleasant place," he said gravely. "Singularly! But Detective Gleason has a wonderful mind. A wonderful mind! To deduce so unerringly the only possible means by which the theft could have taken place."

I looked up from the notes I had been making. The room in which we sat, the Napoleon of Crime and I, was marvelously luxurious. The cigar the arch-criminal had pressed upon me was of splendid quality. We were surrounded by every evidence of affluence and security. It was strange to hear that short, stout man, at ease among all these manifestations of wealth, speak of the sordid surroundings of a police-station as one who had experienced them.

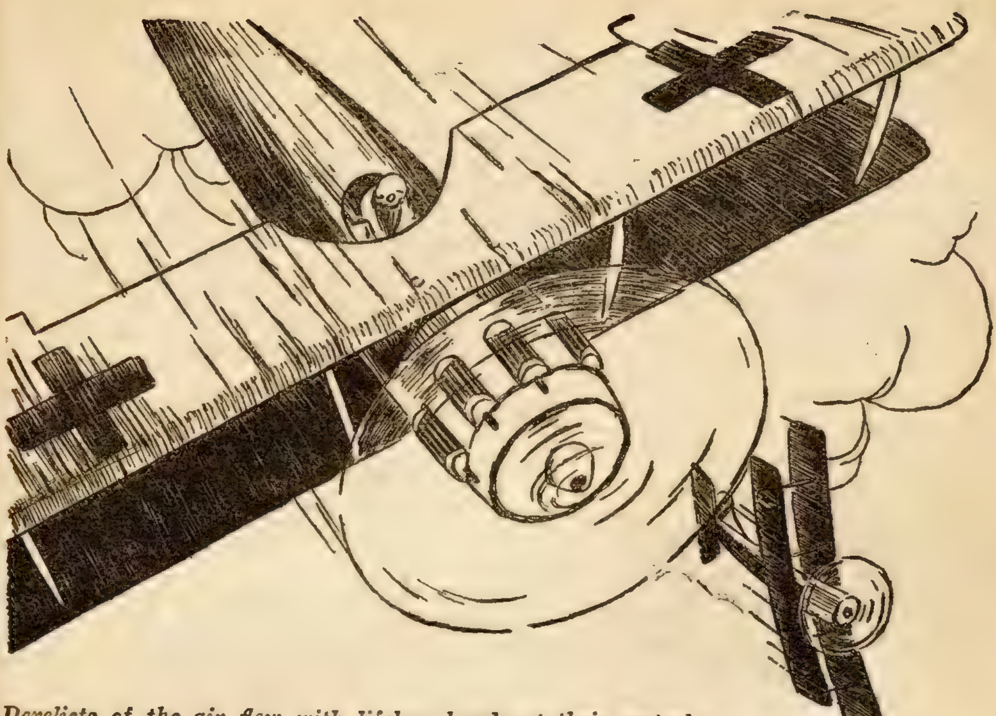
"But what happened?" I asked. "What was the final result?"

"Samuel Winterberg," said the Napoleon of Crime reminiscently, "demanded dire punishment for the poor girl. It developed that it was in my power to assume responsibility for the stones if I wished to purchase them, when I could prosecute or not as I chose. Otherwise I would have to let Winterberg have his way. Obviously, I had to be loyal to my subordinate. I agreed to purchase the stones in order to quash a prosecution. I had the currency in my pocket, as a guarantee of my good will. But as a matter of business I thought it best to insist on an impartial appraisement of the gems in question. A sound business training is invaluable in any line of effort, even in crime."

I waited. The arch-criminal sighed again.

"They were valued at twenty-four dollars and a half," he said thoughtfully. "Samuel Winterberg had tried to sell me paste."

DOWN on Canal Street—as I remarked some time ago—not knowing the inwardness of the matter, they speak of the Great Canal Street Jewel Robbery with bated breath.



Derelicts of the air flew with lifeless hands at their controls.

The Port of Missing Aviators

By ORVILLE H. KNEEN

In the days of myths Icarus ventured up into the unknown and flew too near the sun god's domain. Ever since the disastrous end of the first airman's flight, men's thoughts have winged their way to the stars, and men's minds have grappled with the problem of how to send their bodies up into space. Yet it would seem that there is still a jealous force which resents man's temerity. Men disappear in mid-air—and none can tell why.

WHAT were the thoughts of Commander Richard Byrd on May 9, 1926, as his roaring Fokker plane sped over the icy North Pole area? During that fifteen-hour dash from Spitzbergen, across 1,545 miles of Arctic wastes, did he and Floyd Bennett wonder if they were really the first to gaze down from the air upon that region of mystery and death?

Three days later Amundsen, Ellsworth, and Nobile piloted a dirigible over the same dazzling pole-cap. Were they the first to float in a balloon over the top of the world, from Spitzbergen to Alaska?

The answer to these questions lies shrouded in the silence of the northland. Whether that other daring trio which set out a third of a century ago to float over the Pole actually reached it, only to be lost in the vast Arctic, in Siberia or the wilds of Alaska, remains to this day an unsolvable mystery.

Such a venture, in a motorless balloon at the mercy of every wind, would even to-day seem desperate indeed. Yet the first aerial expedition to the Pole was not hastily conceived nor carelessly prepared. Major Salomon Auguste Andree was a trained mechanical engineer of high repute, head of the Swedish Patent Office. From his earliest youth he had been fired with the ambition to be an aerial navigator.

Balloons filled with inflammable hydrogen gas were the only airships available. Andree made many perilous ascents, once being shipwrecked in the Baltic Sea, another time being carried across the whole of rugged Sweden at imminent risk of death. He made a long and careful study of northern winds and air currents.

At that time no man had ever been even near to the North Pole. Finally Andree announced his conviction that a steady south wind would carry a balloon from Spitzbergen over the polar cap and thence to Siberia or Alaska. Many scientists disagreed. But in the end he enlisted the support of the King of Sweden and other influential friends. For long months he devoted his efforts to obtaining the best balloon and equipment that science could provide.

FOR the envelope he chose the best Chinese pongee silk, with an extra varnished silk cover on top for protection against snow and rain. Cemented strips covered and strengthened the seams. Not only were there two valves, operated from the suspended car, but Andree provided an automatic safety valve to open under a given pressure. To save his car from being dragged in a heavy wind, during the final landing, he had a rending flap to open wide and empty the bag almost instantly.

In the car Andree placed every imaginable item of equipment. He had books, charts, compasses, sextants, barometers, telescopes, thermometers, photographic apparatus. There were buoys, grapnels, ropes, sledges, spars, snowshoes, medicinal supplies, lamps, electric batteries —even a light collapsible boat and oars.

The balloon carried food for three months. Andree had designed an ingenious alcohol stove, suspended below the car when in use, to prevent danger of igniting the hydrogen gas of the balloon. In the car's bottom were sleeping bags of reindeer skin on mattresses. Not a single detail for comfort, safety, and scientific study was overlooked.

How far did their planning take the intrepid explorers? Did they succeed, only to lose their lives in the end?

The balloon was inflated on bleak Dane's Island, farthest north "jumping-off place." But no south wind came, and the season of 1896 quickly waned. It was May 30, 1897, when the adventurers reached their camp for the second attempt. The winter's damage to the great octagonal shed, over sixty feet high, was repaired. On June 20 they began to generate hydrogen gas from sulphuric acid and iron filings.

Ten days later the great gas-bag was full, all leaks stopped, everything ready for the south wind. It came on July 11, and so violent was it that it shook the shed, protected as it was by high mountains on all sides except that leading to the open sea. After hours of anxious study, Andree announced calmly: "The departure is decided upon."

At 11 A. M., says M. Lachambre, designer of the balloon, Andree stood beside the shed, observing everything. From a speaking trumpet his orders rang out rapidly. Wooden beams cracked and crashed to the ground as they were torn from the upper part of the shed. All was feverish activity.

Bags of ballast were then let down. The *Eagle* slowly arose. Puffs of wind swayed her from side to side. Baskets containing the thirty-two carrier pigeons were placed, then the car was brought in and attached. Andree was everywhere, giving a last glance at every detail.

One of his companions handed over his last letter, and, with great emotion at the thought of leaving all that he held dearest in the world for such a hazardous undertaking, requested that proofs of the last photographs be sent his fiancée in Sweden. Andree gave over his final telegrams. Final farewells were brief but touching, hearty handclasps taking the place of words.

Suddenly Andree strode away, climbed to the wicker bridge of the car, and called in firm tones:

"Strindberg — Fraenkel — let us go!"

They took their places at his side. Straps at the *Eagle's* middle were cut. Almost freed, the bag seemed to come to life—it rolled, tried to free itself. Andree waited for a moment of calm as the wind whistled through the woodwork. The canvas roof flapped violently. Among the cordage of the car the three voyagers stood coolly and calmly.

Andree showed not a trace of emotion. His chin was set with firm resolution and indomitable will. At the decisive moment he ordered:

"One—two—three—cut!"

Three sailors severed the last three ropes. The aerial ship, free and unfettered, rose majestically into space, amid heartiest cheers. All rushed to the doors and watched the balloon as it rose to some three hundred feet. They groaned as a sudden wind dragged it down until the car touched the icy waves. Then the *Eagle* rose into her element and sped rapidly toward the open sea, her guide-ropes cutting a white wake in the waters of the strait.

BREATHLESSLY the watchers wave their last farewells. They see the sails being unfurled on the bamboo mast, an invention of Andree's to assist in guiding their course. Now the *Eagle* changes direction, speeding straight north at twenty or more miles an hour. That rate should take them to the Pole in less than two days, for it is only six hundred odd miles away.

The balloon now seems no larger than an egg. The mountains seem to close around it. The watchers fear it will be wrecked on the jagged snow-capped peaks. But an upward current lifts it clear. It skims over the top of the hill, stands out clearly for a few minutes against the blue sky. They gaze silently as it disappears behind the hill.

For one moment then, between two hills, we perceive a gray speck over

> the sea, very, very far away, and then it finally disappears. The way to the Pole is clear—no more obstacles to encounter—the sea, the ice-field, and the Unknown!

Thus Andree and his intrepid companions sailed into the eternal silence of the Arctic. The papers of the day were full of comment—favorable, pessimistic, hopeful. The New York *Times* of July 17 carried its first notice of the departure six days before. Four days later an editorial pointed out:

> They have gone forth in a new way to encounter the unknown and to brave dangers which have not been braved before. These men commit themselves to the winds to be their helpless sport and prey, not foreseeing a return and knowing that a halt will mean for them a lingering death by cold and hunger.

Nothing was heard until the middle of August, when it was learned that a northern fisherman had killed a carrier pigeon July 22. It carried a signed message dated two days after the *Eagle* had soared from its nest. It read:

> July 13, 12:30 P. M., 82° 2′ north latitude, 15° 5′ east longitude: Good progress toward the north. All goes well on board. This message is the third by pigeon.—Andree.

Over sixty days after the balloon's departure a mysterious telegram came from Siberia, saying that a balloon believed to be Andree's had been sighted September 14 for a few minutes. Tests had shown that the *Eagle* could hardly have remained in the air over fifty days at most. Even if aloft, why should the men have passed over six hundred miles of inhabited land?

Another pigeon was reported caught, carrying, from a location in the interior of Alaska, a message, which read:

> North Pole passed fifteenth.

But this pigeon did not carry Andree's markings. Five of his cork buoys were picked up, two with authentic messages of progress. The thirteenth buoy, which the explorers had intended to throw overboard at the point nearest to the Pole, was picked up two years later on the coast of Spitzbergen—empty!

That was the last trace ever found of the *Eagle* and its brave passengers. What did their eyes see as that south wind drove them northward, over the top of the globe? Were they in fact the first humans to cross that land of mystery—only to be frozen to death in the icy water or amidst the blizzards of the Arctic, Siberia, or Alaska?

Somewhere in the north a tiny mound of human forms and scattered things lay for a few hours, still and silent. Sweeping, biting snows drifted over it. Swiftly the ice gods lowered a white curtain on man's first valiant attempt to ride the storms of their vast empire. If the fliers landed on the ice-fields, their bodies may still be perfectly preserved. But no man will ever know the secret of their "farthest north."

SINCE their first victory, the invisible powers of the air have added many another mystery to that of Andree. Thirty years later to the day, on July 11, 1927, eyewitnesses near Lake Manitoba saw an aerial surveying plane of the Canadian government enter a cloudbank. It was lost to view for some minutes. Through rifts in the clouds the plane was seen to become erratic. It turned and twisted in weird gyrations.

Then the watchers were horrified to see three bodies come hurtling through the air, turning over and over at ever-increasing speed. The three surveyors were terribly mangled, their lips forever sealed. The plane nose-dived, and it, too, was wrecked beyond repair or investigation. What was it that picked three men from their seats, to which they were securely strapped, and dashed them a thousand feet to earth?

ALMOST as inexplicable was the fate of Count de Lesseps and his aide, surveying over the eastern part of the province of Quebec. They hopped off October 18, 1927, for a brief seventy-five mile flight. Three days later the wreckage of their plane was found in the St. Lawrence River. The barograph had stopped at 4:01 P. M., three hours after they had started.

Wings and rudder had been stripped with terrific force from the body; the motor and other parts were gone. In the cockpit were a watch and a pair of socks. The straps had been loosened, indicating the fliers had freed themselves before the plane struck the water. But to this day search parties have found not a single trace of them. If they were drowned, their bodies should have risen to the surface before being carried out to sea. Their fate will probably remain forever unknown, as will the cause of the strange disaster.

The oceans are destined to hold forever the secrets of the brave airmen who tried in vain to span their waters last summer. Why, where, and how the sturdy planes were forced down, only the sea waves can say. Ocean liners, speeding in answer to S O S signals, found no clue in any case. The last hours, or minutes, of these all-too-daring crews must go down among the unsolved riddles of the air and the seas.

First and one of the most tragic of these flights to the Port of Missing Planes was that of Charles Nungesser and François Coli, brilliant war pilots of France. From Le Bourget field the *White Bird* headed straight out to sea on May 8, 1927. It was unseen after leaving France, except for a possible sighting near the tip of Ireland.

The French aces were headed for the nearest land at Nova Scotia. For weeks afterward strange reports emanated from the wilds of Canada. Trappers reported wreckage far inland. At least nine persons at widely-separated points swore they saw or heard a white plane near Harbor Grace. Flares were seen, carrier-pigeon and floating-bottle messages reported. It is agreed that a wrecked plane could remain hidden for months in the rugged and heavily-wooded interior of Canada.

But search parties and planes have found no clue to this day. No doubt, if Nungesser and Coli conquered the icy fogs and the sea, only to lose their way or be forced down in the wilds of Canada, the evidence will be found some day. Perhaps a hunter or trapper will stumble across all that remains of the *White Bird* and its gallant pilots, and another riddle of the air will be solved.

Captain Hamilton, Lieutenant-Colonel Minchin, and their passenger, Princess Lowenstein-Wertheim, hopped off August 31 from England. They too disappeared into the same darkness that engulfed the Frenchmen. The weather was fair. They had a reliable Fokker engine. Whether ice or engine failure forced them down will never be known. On the ocean bottom somewhere are the only clues which might tell us what happened to the *St. Raphael* and its crew on the last summer day of 1927.

The *Sir John Carling* of Canada, heading out for England through fog and rain, met the same grim power of the Atlantic. It too was never seen or heard from again. The day before, on September 6, the monoplane *Old Glory* roared away from New York, bound for Rome, but landed in the vast unknown. Fourteen hours out, her radio suddenly flashed an S O S. Another followed in a few minutes. Five vessels headed for the plane, estimated to be some five hundred miles out over the broad Atlantic.

Then came the last mystifying call: "WRHP—Five hours out of Newfoundland, East." Where were they—why did they not give their position? Throughout that day and late into the night the Cunarder *Transylvania,* nearest at hand, searched the high seas amid a racing wind that would have swamped any plane or lifeboat. No clue was found.

Later a specially chartered vessel reached the scene, and at last a forty-seven-foot section of a wing was picked up, in the midst of a widening film of oil, six hundred and fifty miles from land. A part of the under carriage was attached, its struts of steel tubing, three inches in diameter, smashed as from a terrific blow. Members of the searching crew estimated that the plane must have hit the water, head on, at a speed of a mile and a half a minute.

The wreckage was clearly that of *Old Glory.* No trace has ever been found of pilots Lloyd W. Bertaud and James De Witt Hill, or of the mysterious passenger who leaped into the cockpit just as the plane hopped off—Philip A. Payne, managing editor of the *Daily Mirror.* Whatever happened, it was apparently far too sudden to permit even the scribbling of a farewell message.

THE coast of Brazil and its waters claimed three more lives just as bafflingly. Captain St. Roman and Commander Mouneyres, flying between Senegal and Pernambuco, were swallowed up in the silence of the tropics. And Paul Redfern, hopping off on August 25 from Brunswick, Georgia, on a 4,600-mile flight to Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, has left no certain clue as to his fate.

Redfern, it is said, could have ridden the waves for some time. He carried enough gas for fifty-two hours in the air, with the same type of motor used by Lindbergh. Yet five days later he was reported by a mail carrier over the delta of the Orinoco River, several hundred miles west of his course. He might have landed and then taken off again some days later. American Consul Bonney reported that three natives also saw his plane near Georgetown, a few hundred miles from the mouth of the Orinoco.

Although Redfern passed through a heavy storm and waterspouts soon after he hopped off, he appears to have actually flown to the coast of Venezuela or close to it. For on the second day he flew over the Norwegian steamer *Christian Krogh,* one hundred and sixty-five miles off the coast, and dropped a note of which Redfern's father later said: "There is absolutely no doubt this is Paul's handwriting."

An aviator's helmet, found near Georgetown, may have been dropped by Redfern. He was prepared to live for months in the wild interior of South America. Although hope has faded that he will startle the world with a sudden reappearance, his plane and perhaps his remains may yet be found hidden away in a tropical tangle on the southern continent.

LAST summer the normally peaceful Pacific claimed seven lives of aviators, including that of Miss Mildred Doran, first woman to go down to the sea in an airplane. Major Livingston Irving, prominent army flier, recently noted the strange fact that all of the planes appear to have been lost in what he terms a "death spot" some five hundred to seven hundred miles out of San Francisco. This area, he believes, is formed by a fearful swirling of warm and cold ocean currents and winds, over the shallow Erben Banks, only three hundred fathoms deep.

The first civilian fliers to Hawaii, Ernest L. Smith and Emory Bronte, suddenly whirled into the dreaded tailspin near this spot, but survived it. Whether the *Miss Doran* and the *Golden Eagle* perished in the area of death is not known for certain. But apparently Captain Erwin and Alvin Eichwaldt, searching for the lost aviators, went into their fatal tailspin within the terrible "death spot."

The San Francisco operator who caught Captain Erwin's last radio message: "We are in spin . . . " heard clearly the long wail of the air-driven dynamo as its speed suddenly increased enormously. He estimated that it was driven at two hundred miles an hour before it ceased, apparently as the falling plane struck the water. The *West Sequana* saw a strange red flare only three miles off her starboard bow. But the *Dallas Spirit* had gone down to join the others at the Port of Missing Planes.

A grim and inexplicable tragedy marked the reaching of the highest altitude ever attained by man. On November 4, 1927, Captain Hawthorne C. Gray, of the U. S. Army, cast off in a balloon, determined to make good his record of six months previously, when he had been forced to jump out before he had landed, as the rules require.

The balloon landed with Captain Gray's lifeless body. He had cut one of the oxygen tubes, apparently to connect another tank. At that moment something occurred to still his heart and lips forever. Perhaps he simply became too weak from lack of oxygen. Or it may be that the pressure of only four pounds, instead of the normal of 14.7 pounds at sea level, caused the bursting of an artery. He died alone, eight miles above the earth, perhaps in a last desperate struggle to start downward again toward safety and life. "An extremely remarkable coincidence," said the War Department afterward, "lies in the fact that this is exactly the same altitude reached by Captain Gray on his first attempt of May 4, 1927."

THE World War saw a number of air tragedies which will never be solved. Several Zeppelins went out on raids or for reconnaissance, and never returned. Some of these, it is now known, were not attacked by gunfire or airplane. They simply vanished. The wooden airship SL-10 left a few charred remains. She had gone out to attack the Russians on the Black Sea. The cause of her burning remains a mystery.

The Zeppelin L-59 took on a load of over six tons of bombs on April 7, 1918, and set out to raid the British naval base at Malta, in the Mediterranean. The watch officer of the German submarine U-53 sighted her. Thirty minutes later he saw two large balls of fire where the great dirigible had been. She had burned in mid-air, from some unaccountable explosion or fire.

The L-62 was similarly burned. An hour before, she had been in a fight with an English hydroplane. But dirigibles burst into flames at once when they are hit. A smoldering fire would have given time for a landing on the water. Such grim tragedies of the air leave no survivors and no explanations.

The most amazing experience among dirigibles came to the crew of the L-50. Cruising for twenty-four hours over Paris and the Alps, they finally went so high that they had to resort to oxygen tanks. They became so weak and cold that they could not operate the controls or attend the motors. When the huge Zeppelin headed for a mountain in Switzerland they could not avert a collision.

The impact knocked off the control car, and, strangely enough, deposited most of the crew safely on the ground. As they struggled out of the wrecked car, they saw the battered dirigible soaring upward with four of the crew still aboard. She drifted northward, and was never seen or heard of again. No doubt the bottom of the Mediterranean holds the secret of her end.

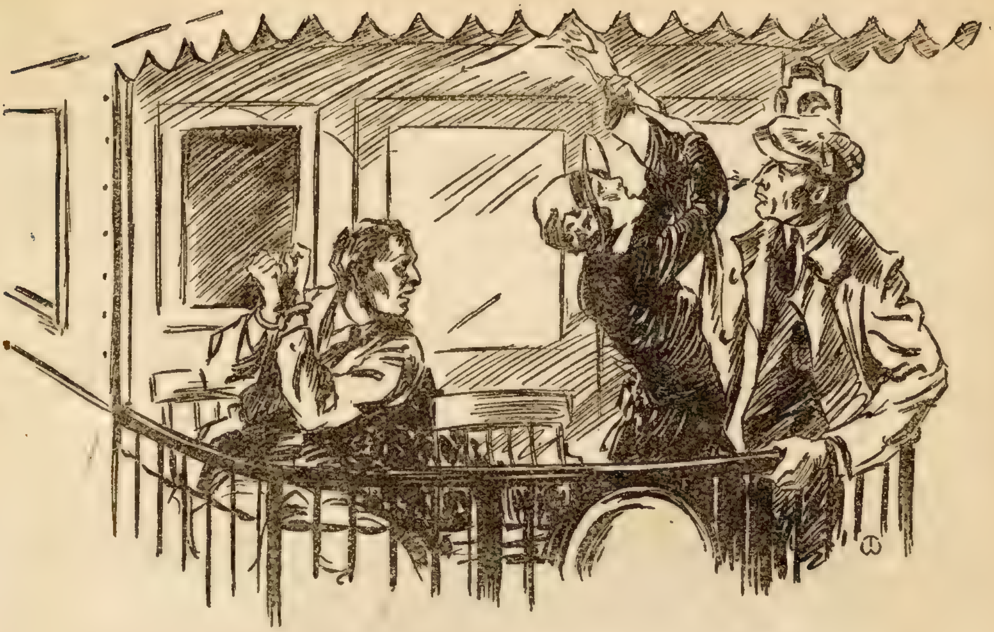
Weirdest of all the war's air mysteries were the derelicts of the air that flew with lifeless hands on their controls. Baron Richtoven, famous German ace who brought down eighty Allied planes before he was killed, reported such a plane, which eventually crashed.

But an Australian plane had an experience which seems scarcely credible, yet is officially recorded. The pilots had managed to escape from a sudden German onslaught. An hour later the plane was reported as having landed safely in a field fifty miles away, with both pilots lifeless and cold!

"Both airmen were still strapped in their seats," says the report. "An immediate post-mortem examination proved that both of them had been dead for an hour. An armor-piercing bullet had passed through the observer's left lung from behind and then into the base of the pilot's skull, killing him instantly. The gas tanks were found to be intact and empty. The doctors and the air experts, from a study of all the facts, established that the Australians had been killed instantly in their combat, and that the plane had flown on with fixed controls until the gasoline gave out."

AS men fly over vast areas of waste water and uninhabited land, there doubtless will be other unsolvable mysteries of the air. As the world shrinks, and speeds of even five miles per minute are exceeded, the upper atmosphere will become increasingly fascinating. There are men to-day ready to step into a rocket type of airship, to be projected at inconceivable speed into the high regions where air resistance is negligible.

Whether outer space will ever be conquered remains for the airmen and scientists of the future to determine. Perhaps the day will come when air mysteries will largely center around men shot into unfathomable space in quest of knowledge and adventure.



"Help me, honey, help me!" she shrieked.

The Last Laugh

By GEORGE FIELDING ELIOT

The principal incident in this striking story is based upon an occurrence which actually took place at North Portal, Saskatchewan, some years ago. Captain Eliot was a member of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police at the time.

WALLY GRANT, his overalls rolled into a neat bundle under his arm, unlatched the gate of the cottage and ran lightly up the walk to the front door.

"Flo!" he shouted happily. "Oh, Flo!"

The shout and the thunderous knock that accompanied it brought half-a-dozen inquiring feminine faces—always interested in the idiosyncrasies of "new neighbors"—to as many nearby windows, even before fluffy little Florence Grant came flying to unhook the screen and admit her lord and master, to be kissed and cooed over.

After the preliminary clinch, Wally flung his overalls into a corner and himself into the big chair, while Flo perched on his knee.

"Honey," he said, "I feel just like the guy in the correspondence school ad.—only, instead of owing it all to the coupon, I owe it all to *you!*"

"Why, Wally!" cried his wife. "Whatever do you mean?"

"Listen, little one. To-day the boss comes to me, and he says: 'Grant, you're a darned good mechanic. How'd you like to be foreman of this garage?' The shock nearly killed me, but I managed to tell him I'd like it mighty well. 'I'm glad to hear it,' says he. 'Bill's leaving me the first of the month—wants to go to California. You keep on like you're doing, and the job's yours.' Just like that!"

"Oh-h-h-h! *Wally!* Not really?"

"Ab-so-lute-ly, Angel-face. Now what do you think of your hard-working husband?"

FLO'S happy face went suddenly serious.

"Aren't you glad you broke away from the old gang in Spokoma now, Wally?" she asked. "Aren't you *glad?*"

"I sure am, sweetie," her husband answered. "I'd never have done it but for you, either. I want to tell you something, Flo: I made a lot of dough in the booze business, first and last, but I spent it just as quick as I made it; and I've never been so happy in all my life as since I've been here with you in Great Falls and had to dig my hands in good old black grease for every nickel I got!"

This was a long, serious speech for happy-go-lucky Wally. Flo choked a little, couldn't quite find words for answer, but her quick kiss was answer enough.

"You took an awful chance when you married Wally the bootlegger, honey," her husband said. "But you're not going to be sorry."

"I know I'm not," she said. "That's why I made you leave Spokoma, to get clear away from it all, and come with me to Montana. I know lots of folks here in Great Falls and all 'round this country. We'll have plenty of friends—real friends—and we'll be happy, won't we, boy?"

"Sure we will," answered Wally. He grinned at a sudden recollection. "Say, Flo, wouldn't you have liked to see Dan McCleary's face when he realized I was gone and he'd never get any more rake-offs from my little gas-boat? I'll bet he was wild!"

Flo shivered a little.

"Don't talk about McCleary, hon," she said. "I'm afraid of him even yet. You know what he always said: 'No man ever double-crossed me and got away with it!'"

"Aw, that's the bunk!" exclaimed Wally. "Anyway, I didn't double-cross him. I just left town. What if he was expecting me to bring in a boat-load of booze and slip him his usual five hundred? He can get another motor-boat and another sucker, can't he? He's still chief of detectives, isn't he? Why should he worry about me?"

Flo was silent. After a moment her husband smiled in understanding.

"You mean because he was stuck on you, don't you, little girl?" he asked.

Flo nodded.

"Yes," she said in a low voice. "He often told me that if he couldn't have me, he'd see that no one else did. And, Wally, I'm afraid sometimes, even now, when I think of him. He's cruel and mean and hard all through."

"Don't worry, Flo," Wally said, drawing her close. "He can't do anything. We're safe. But, girl, girl, I bet he's good and sore!"

Flo laughed her little tinkling laugh.

"I guess it is funny if you look at it right," she said.

THE man who had been listening at the door for the past five minutes suddenly straightened up. He was a big, powerful fellow, well-dressed, prosperous-looking, and possessed of a deceivingly cordial, hail-fellow-well-met atmosphere. Just now, however, his normal beaming smile was gone; the set lines of his rather full-lipped mouth denoted only cruelty. He raised his hand to knock, then noted that the screen door was unhooked. He silently pulled open the screen, pushed back the inner door, which stood slightly ajar, and stepped into the living-room of the cottage.

"Enjoy your laugh, folks," he remarked bitingly. "It'll be your last one for quite a while."

"My God!" exclaimed Wally, very white.

"McCleary!" quavered Florence. "What—what do you want?"

"I want that husband of yours," Chief of Detectives Dan McCleary answered. "I've got four warrants for his arrest."

He drew a sheaf of folded papers from an inner pocket.

"What for?" demanded Wally.

"Three of 'em for illegal sale and transportation of liquor—those are State warrants. They're good for about six months apiece with old Grubb on the bench. Besides that, I've got a nice little Federal warrant, too. You ought to get a couple of years at McNeil's Island, anyway, on that one, Wally, my boy. I went to all the trouble of havin' myself appointed a temporary deputy marshal just to have the pleasure of servin' it on you."

"You can't get away with anything like that!" exclaimed Wally, jumping to his feet. "Why, you've been mixed up in every deal I've been in. You——"

"Yes?" cut in the burly chief. "Yes? Prove it."

"Why — why — everybody knows it," Wally asserted. "Butch and Hal Parsons and Oley—the whole gang."

"And what do you suppose the gang thinks of you by now, you yellow quitter?" snarled McCleary, suddenly savage. "Do you suppose they'll turn a hand to save you after the way you ducked out on them? If you do, you're an even bigger fool than I think you are, and that's sayin' a whole lot."

"It's a dirty frame-up!" Wally cried.

"Maybe it is," answered McCleary. "Frame-up or not, I've got the warrants—and I'll get convictions, too, when I get you into court."

"LISTEN, Dan McCleary," Florence cut in appealingly. "Wally's cut out all that old stuff. He's got a good job, and he's going straight. Why can't you lay off him? What good does it do you to hound him like this?"

"What good?" McCleary snapped. "Just this much good—he double-crossed me, and he's not gettin' by with it. That's all. Stick out your mitts, Grant."

He pulled a pair of handcuffs from his pocket and advanced toward Wally.

"That isn't necessary," Wally said. "I'll go along."

"You can just bet you'll go along," McCleary answered, "and you'll go with these bracelets on, too. Come on—stick 'em out!"

Dumbly Wally obeyed. The steel cuffs snapped into place.

"I found out where you were easy

enough," the officer gloated, "and I ran down to Helena and got extradition papers all fixed up before I came after you, so we can get goin' right away. Get your hat. The train leaves in half an hour."

"I'll get it, Wally," Florence said, "and my own, too. I'm going with you. We can lock the house up for the present."

"You're not goin' with *us,*" snapped McCleary.

"Oh, yes, I am," Florence answered. "I've got plenty of money to pay my fare, and I'm going right along to look after Wally. You don't own the Great Northern Railroad, McCleary, and you can't stop me!"

"Come ahead, then," McCleary yielded with ill grace. "If you must see your sheik here put away for a few years, come ahead. Much good it'll do you. Funny, wasn't it, how you put it over on Dan McCleary? Real funny! Had quite a laugh, didn't you? Why don't you laugh now, *Mrs.* Grant?"

"Let her alone, McCleary!" flashed Wally.

"Shut up, you crook!" McCleary snarled, and gave the manacled wrists a savage twist that drew a sharp gasp from Wally. "Shut up and come along."

THE branch-line train had rattled and clattered on its way for an hour or more when the conductor paused by the seat which held McCleary and his prisoner.

"You're going through to Spokoma, aren't you?" he asked.

"You bet we are," said McCleary jauntily.

"You'll be held up a while at Shelby," the conductor informed him. "The coast train is reported three hours late. She won't get in till about eight-thirty."

"Suits me," McCleary answered. "That'll give me time to eat in comfort. I hate to be rushed at my meals."

Florence, who was in the seat ahead, turned round presently.

"I think I'll run over to see Cousin Mollie when we get to Shelby," she remarked, "since we have plenty of time there. I haven't seen her for months. Wish you could go with me, Wally," she added wistfully.

"Well, he can't," McCleary snapped. "He's goin' to the hotel with me. I oughta put him in the jail, but I won't bother for just three hours. He won't get away from little Dan—you can bet your sweet life on that!"

McCLEARY had finished a comfortable supper in a Shelby restaurant, and was amusing himsel by twitting the miserable Wally on his lack of appetite, with entertaining comment on the menu in the Federal penitentiary, when Florence entered all out of breath.

"Hurry up, you people!" she exclaimed. "The train made up time between here and Havre, and it's in the station right now. Hurry or you'll miss it."

McCleary lumbered to his feet.

"Let's go," he said.

They walked quickly out of the restaurant and cut across through a side street toward the railroad. A long train, with an illuminated observation car at the rear, stood in the station, its great locomotive panting, expectant. They crossed the tracks and stepped up on the platform. A boy in a uniform cap ran forward and seized McCleary's grip.

"Spokoma train, sir? Right this way, sir."

They followed him to the forward vestibule of the observation car, which stood open, attended by a white-jacketed darky.

"Wheah to, sah?" he asked.

"Spokoma," McCleary answered.

"Yassah, dat's right, sah. What cah you-all in?"

McCleary fished out his tickets.

"Here you are," he said, extending them.

"Section five, cah fohty-seven," the porter announced. "That cah's all made up, boss. If you-all wants to set up a while, bettah go back in th' obse'vation."

"I'm tired—" McCleary began.

Florence laid a soft little hand on his arm.

"Let's, Dan," she begged. "I mayn't have many more chances to be with Wally. Please, Dan!"

Her voice quivered pleadingly.

McCleary grunted.

"Playin' up to me now, the little devil!" he thought to himself. "Much good it'll do her. I'll have some fun stringin' her along for a while.

"All right," he said, aloud. "Get aboard, then."

"I'll jus' give these heah tickets to the conductah, sah," the porter said. "Then he won't have to bothah you no moah."

"'S jake with me," McCleary answered indifferently, shoving the downcast Wally up the steps of the car.

Florence produced her own tickets and held them out to the obliging darky.

"Here's mine, too, porter," she said, and followed her husband and his captor back into the luxuriously fitted-up observation compartment.

THEY were hardly settled comfortably when the conductor's shout of "Boar-r-d" sounded outside, and with a gentle jerk the train slid out of the station.

"We're on our way!" gloated McCleary. "It's goin' to be a long, long trip for you, Wally, my brave lad. Anyway, you're goin' to be a long time gettin' back from it."

He continued to jeer and gibe as station after station whirled away behind them. The train stopped frequently, but between stops made good time over the rather rough and uneven track. Wally and Florence talked intermittently. Florence seemed to make a point of including the detective in her conversation. Her manner was more friendly toward him than before. He sneered inwardly at her pathetic attempts to win his favor.

"Little fool!" he thought.

THE train whistled for another station, and the brakes grumbled beneath the car as they were gently applied for the stop. Florence was suddenly pale as a ghost. As the train paused, she redoubled her feverish chatter. The stop was an unusually long one.

"Must be unloadin' about three tons of express here," McCleary said finally. He looked at Florence with curious eyes. She was nervously clasping her hands, her words rattling on almost at random.

"What's the matter with you?" the detective demanded, dully suspicious. "What's eatin' you, anyway?"

"Nothing at all," Florence assured him. "I'm just—just nervous and upset, that's all."

"Huh!" growled McCleary. "Well, I'll be nervous if we don't get out of this dump before long. What's the name of it, anyway?"

As he peered out, the train started. The signboard on the little station slid by, plainly visible.

McCleary sprang to his feet with a roar of anger, reaching for the signal cord. Quick as he was, the girl was quicker.

"Help me, honey, help me!" she shrieked, and grabbed McCleary's upflung arm with both hands, swinging on it all her weight. She was just in time. The car lurched, and the cord evaded the clutching fingers. Cursing, McCleary flung the girl into a corner with a backward sweep of his arm and reached for the cord again just as young Grant, rising to the occasion, leaped at him, manacled hands upraised. The train groaned to a stop again.

"Never mind, Wally!" Florence cried, picking herself up, her eyes shining joyously. "Never mind! Let him pull the old cord all he wants to—now!"

The forward door of the car opened, to admit a rotund gentleman in a rather loud checked suit, followed by a tall, bronzed, soldierly-looking fellow wearing a smart olive-drab uniform and a Stetson hat.

"Hello, Mr. Gregson!" Florence greeted the check-suited one. "How are you? Cousin Mollie sends her regards—and all her thanks, too."

"Always glad to oblige your Cousin Mollie, Flo," the rotund gentleman replied. "Is this person Mr. McCleary?"

"That's my name," answered the angry detective. "What is it to you? Let me warn you, mister, you'd better not interfere with an officer in the performance of his duty!"

GREGSON turned to the man in uniform.

"There's your party, constable," he remarked.

The other stepped forward, consulting a legal-looking paper which he held in his hand.

"You are Daniel McCleary, Chief of Detectives of the city of Spokoma, U. S. A.?" he asked courteously.

"I most certainly am," McCleary affirmed.

"And this is Wallace Grant, whom you are detaining in custody?" the other continued.

"Right you are," said McCleary again. "What about it? I've got four perfectly good warrants."

The other waved them aside.

"Never mind all that," he said. "I am Constable Ferrell of the Alberta Provincial Police, and I have here a writ of habeas corpus which I now serve upon you, Daniel McCleary, commanding you in the King's name forthwith to bring the body of Wallace Grant before the Honorable Peter Judson, Judge of the Court of King's Bench at Lethbridge, Alberta, and show good and sufficient cause and due warrant of law why the said Wallace Grant should be held in your custody and deprived of his liberty within the Province of Alberta and the Dominion of Canada."

He thrust the paper into McCleary's hand as he spoke.

"I've been jobbed!" yelled the outraged detective. "It's all a dirty trick! They put me on the wrong train at Shelby! Look here, you're a policeman—you won't aid a criminal to get away? Here's the warrants—hold him till I can get a writ of extradition."

The tall young constable took the warrants and scanned them, then handed them back with a smile.

"Sorry, Mr. McCleary," he remarked genially. "Those warrants are all for liquor charges of various sorts. 'Fraid you won't find offenses of that type included in the extradition treaties. It looks to me, old timer, as though you were out of luck!"

McCleary's face went purple with rage.

"You—you—" he gasped, choking.

"Be careful, Mr. McCleary," advised the chubby Gregson suavely. "You'll have a stroke."

The constable turned to Wally.

"I'll have to detain you in custody, Mr. Grant, until you can appear in court at Lethbridge," he said, "but your detention will be purely nominal. Mr. Gregson, here, is well known in these parts, and I'll just take you before our local J. P. and have you remanded on Mr. Gregson's recognizance for the present. Take those handcuffs off, please," he added to the overpowered McCleary.

The detective snarled wordlessly, but made no move to obey.

"Take those handcuffs off, and be quick about it!" the constable commanded, and the cool courtesy was gone from his voice. It rang hard as steel.

Silently McCleary obeyed. He knew when he was beaten.

"If you'll come this way, Mr. Grant," the constable went on, "we'll get the formalities over with."

Wally caught Florence in his arms and kissed her.

"I don't know how this happened, sweetie," he said earnestly, "but I'm mighty sure you had something to do with it—God bless your clever little head! I'll be right back!"

He kissed her again, turned, and followed the discreetly retiring constable from the car.

McCleary, Florence and Gregson stood watching the departing pair with varying emotions. Florence, choking back a happy sob, turned to the detective.

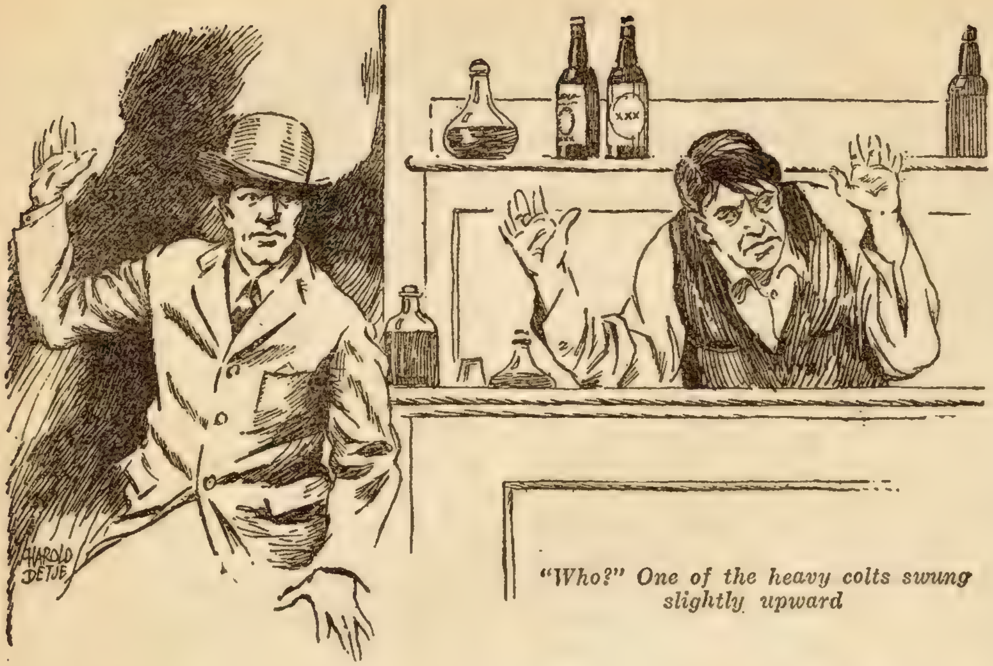
"Want to know how it was done, Mr. McCleary?" she asked sweetly. "I'll tell you. I knew about this branch line train leaving Shelby for Coutts, Alberta, where we now are. While I was at Cousin Mollie's, she spoke of her friend, Mr. Gregson, whom I knew. He is a lawyer at Lethbridge, north of here. The idea came to me like a flash. I wired Mr. Gregson, I bribed the boy who met us on the platform, and I also bribed the porter. I bought three tickets for Coutts and gave them to the porter for us, so the conductor wouldn't come back here and give the show away. I thought I'd die of suspense when we stopped so long at Sweetgrass—just a hundred yards back there, across the border. You began to suspect something then, too, but not soon enough—and I won, Dan McCleary, I won! I beat you!"

"Arrrh!" grated the vanquished McCleary.

"Mr. Gregson's going to get Wally a good job in Lethbridge," the girl went on. "Cousin Mollie's writing him a long letter—they're old friends, you know. And we're going to be happy right here in Canada—together!"

The girl's half-hysterical, wholly joyous laughter rang suddenly through the car.

"You asked me why I didn't laugh, back there in Great Falls, Dan McCleary," she cried, between shrieks of glee. "Well, I'm laughing now, McCleary — I'm laughing now!"



"Who?" One of the heavy colts swung slightly upward

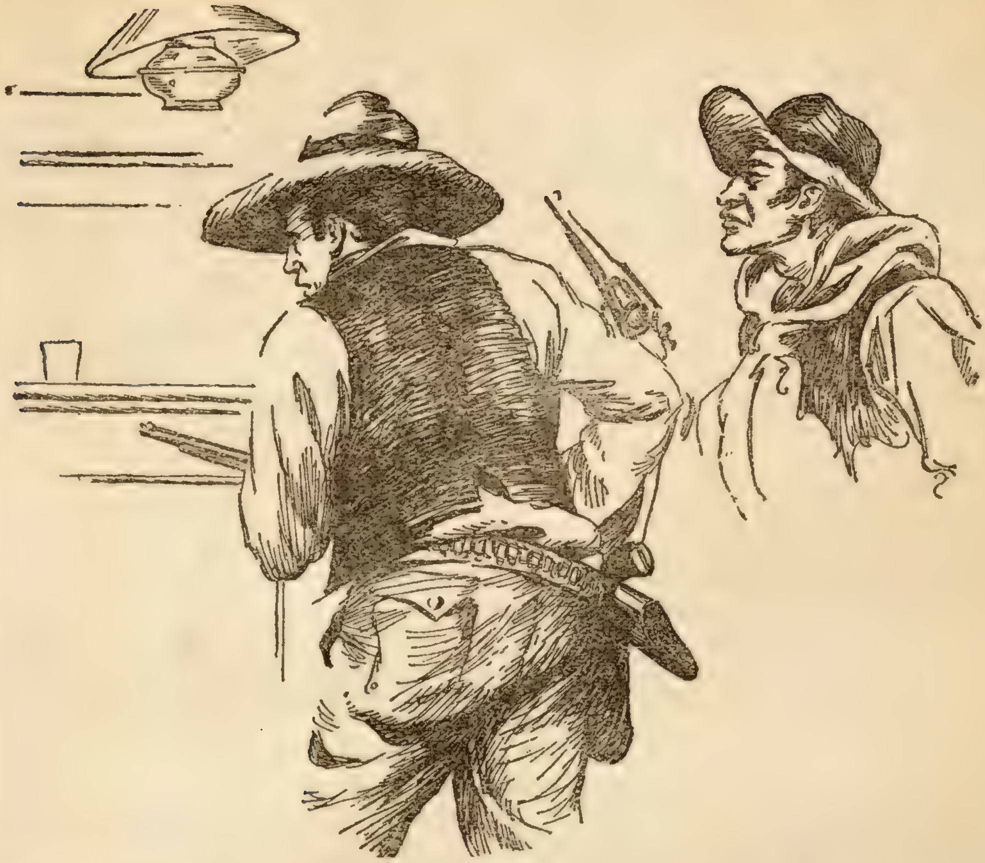
The Gent in the Derby Hat

By ROBERT CARSE

The sheriff had known the stranger in other days, and he realized his identity almost immediately. But then, the sheriff didn't get a look at the little man's hat.

IN THE sun-white vastness of that desert even the eastbound express seemed small and somehow futile. When it had gone roaring toward the magenta rim of the horizon the little man in the derby hat felt strangely thankful. This was what he had come west again for—this, before him. Standing in the ribbed shadow cast by the legs of the water-tank, he gazed out over the 'dobe and corrugated tin shacks of the town at the immense fiery lake of the desert, lipped on the far side by faint purple mountains. Mountains which, from here, were nothing but a deeper haze above the golden haze of the desert. The small man in the derby took a chew of tobacco thoughtfully, crossed a rusty siding-track, and went down the flint-hard little road toward the town.

"YER lucky yuh found me," said the barkeeper of the "Montana



Moon." "All hands has gone over t' Pete Goyo's fer his *fiesta.* Huh? One o' Pete's punchers has been kinda lookin' fer me fer th' last month—says I short-changed him last pay-day when he had a snootful . . . . Sure, I been keepin' bar fer fourteen years . . . . Sure, he's a *loco hombre,* but he's a shootin' one, too, an' Hipe Ferris—he's th' jasper yuh say yer lookin' for?—Hipe he tole me tuh stay away. Hipe he's been sheriff here ever since he come from Tombstone . . . . Yeah, they all rid over afore sun-up. Be ridin' back t'-night after th' barbecue. Pete gives these here *fiestas* every year, an'——"

The barkeeper of the "Montana Moon" then cursed Mr. Goyo's *loco* cow puncher with some degree of fluency. The small man changed his pose at the bar, spat out his old chew, and replenished himself with another.

"No east train until to-morrow?" he asked in his slow, gentle voice.

"Naw. Hipe he's yer friend like yuh say he is, he'll put yuh up over there tuh th' sheriff's office—see it there, next door tuh th' bank?"

On the dusty, deserted street outside, the noon sun beat down in white malevolence. In the low-ceilinged "Montana Moon" it was very hot. The little man in the dark suit and high, stiff collar took off his derby, wiped the sweatband with a broad thumb. From behind the bar the barkeeper stared with unrestrained interest.

"They wear them hard hats much in th' East?"

"Quite a lot," said the other, with a gentle little smile.

"Yuh a salesman?" asked the barkeeper sleepily.

"No."

"What yuh doin' out in this country, then?"

"On a vacation."

"Huh?"

"Vacation from my job."

"Yeah?" There was a strong accent of incredulity in the barkeeper's tones. "What's yer business, mister?"

"I'm a newspaper man."

"A—huh?"

"A reporter on a newspaper."

"But yuh know Hipe Ferriss?"

"He and I used to work together."

"Out here?"

"Out here."

"Well, I'll be ——!" said the barkeeper without violence, and looked again at the derby hat.

"Say," said the barkeeper finally, awakening for a moment from his siesta, "if them *hombres* start actin' up over to Pete Goyo's, Hipe'll hang aroun' an' show 'em religion—an' won't get back till t'-morrow. I'm just tellin' yuh now, 'cause there's a through freight stops at th' tank fer water about 8:10 t'-night. Yuh can catch her out all right, yuh give them brakemen a little plate."

THE small man in the derby was sitting in the shade in the back of the room. He nodded sleepily in the heat of the place and went back to his double solitaire. The barkeeper again lapsed into slumber, head on his arms crossed on the bar, flies making small, droning circles about his sweaty face.

Hoofs slurred in the dust of the street, horses panted, snorted, girths and saddles creaked. The small man looked up from his solitaire into the black eye of a Winchester rifle. He was unarmed, caught unawares. He rose to his feet instantly, hands over his head.

"Up, yo'!" commanded the bow-legged man with the Winchester.

The barkeeper started in his slumbers, blinked, gasped, lifted his hands abruptly toward the ceiling. Boot heels clacked on the board floor as another man swung through the door, a revolver in each hand.

"Who're yo'?" asked the second new-comer of the little man in the derby.

"I come from New York," he answered in his slow, gentle voice.

"What yo' doin' here?" suspiciously.

"Looking for a man I used to know."

"Who?" One of the heavy Colts swung slightly upward.

"Hipe Ferriss."

"So!"

The owner of the two Colts came a bit nearer to the man in the derby, gazed closely at him in the hot shadows.

"He—he don't know Hipe Ferriss; look at the hat!" cut in the barkeeper nervously, wheedlingly.

"Who was askin' yore opinion?" asked the man who held the Winchester, and slapped the barkeeper evilly across the mouth with the back of his hand. The barkeeper gulped teeth, spat blood, was silent. The man with the two Colts still studied the wearer of the derby, finally holstered one of his guns and searched the little man. He found a wallet containing over two hundred dollars in cash, three pencils and a fountain pen. He returned the wallet intact, and the pencils, but kept the fountain pen.

"Tie up these two, here, Chet," he ordered the man with the Winchester. "We ain't got such an awful lot of time."

He waited until Chet had lashed them quite thoroughly with lariat rope, examined the lashings himself, then clacked out the door on his high heels. Chet yanked a chair to the front of the room and sat down, facing them, the Winchester across his knees. Occasionally, ignoring them completely, he rose and peered over the top of the swinging doors toward the bank directly across the street, from which now came dull banging sounds.

"Th' four Springer boys," whispered the barkeeper between blood-caked lips. "Hipe was tol' on'y yestiddy that they was in *calabozo* down in Guadaloupe, or he wouldn't ha' left th' bank—th' town like this. This un here's th' youngest—Chet. That's why they left him here, watchin' us. Th' tall jasper was Mike—he's a bad *hombre*. Th' other two—Harry 'n' Phil—they're over in the bank now, I guess, usin' th' dynamite they brung in on that pack-horse out there at th' hitch-rack."

"Shut up, yo'!" ordered Chet, swinging a bit down the room toward them, the Winchester at his hip. The barkeeper was instantly quiet, trembling slightly.

FLIES mumbled about them and climbed up their faces, over their twitching eyelids, where salt sweat ran slowly. Chet sat at the door, slumped low in his chair, listening. From the little bank building across the street came the dull, quick blows of a sledge hammer, the wrench and whimper of wood and steel. The man in the derby began to moan and mumble faintly, nodding his head from side to side, the askewed hat slipping over his eyes.

"What's th' matter?" asked the barkeeper.

"The heat, these ropes!" whimpered the small man beside him, then fell suddenly forward on his face.

"Say, yo'!" Chet muttered suspiciously, and came forward catlike. "Git up!" He kicked savagely. The figure on the floor did not move; only the derby hat rolled to and fro on the dusty floor. Chet swore horribly, glared at the barkeeper, placed the Winchester on a table, knelt beside the small man, and began to untie him.

"Uh!" grunted Chet, and that was all.

"Gawd, mister," whispered the barkeeper, fearfully. "I think you killed him!"

THE small man said nothing, but swiftly withdrew the rest of his loosened bonds and plucked the revolver from Chet's hip holster, his dusty derby from the floor. The revolver always in one hand, he yanked off his own neat black shoes and encased his feet in Chet's high-heeled, fancy Mexican boots. The barkeeper stared, teeth chattering feebly in amazement. The small man was walking boldly up the room toward the chair by the door, seating himself there. Suddenly the barkeeper understood. Any one watching in the street could look in there under the bottom of the swinging door, see Chet Springer's familiar boots, poised on the bottom chair-rung, and know that everything was all right—that Chet was at his post.

The wearer of the derby leaned forward in the chair now, listening, as Chet had done. Through the slats of the swinging door he could see a little of what was going on in the street outside. Directly in front, at the hitch-rack of the "Montana Moon," five horses twitched and kicked at the flies. Across the street, just this side of the bank, standing warily under the shade of a little corrugated tin porch in front of a store, was Mike Springer, a Winchester under his arm, eyes on the road that led to Pete Goyo's.

In the bank the dull hammer blows and racking tear of wood had stopped. They would be setting off their "shot" soon now, surmised the small man. He cocked the heavy Colt, and swung about inch by inch in his chair, so that he could have a perfect vision of Mike Springer across the street.

Suddenly it came, dully. The sound of it had not yet quite penetrated to his brain when the small man came to his feet, swung open the saloon door, and shot Mike Springer dead. He was out the door and in the street. Unconsciously his left hand lifted up, back, pushed the derby just a little bit over his right eye. Knees outspread, head low on his shoulders, he advanced steadily across the street toward the partly open door of the bank.

At the door, just emerging from the little cubby-hole that served the institution as vault-room, he met Harry Springer, and killed him before the other could even begin to drop the canvas sacks in his arms and reach for his gun. But it took him over fifteen minutes to kill Philip Springer, the last and oldest of the brothers.

He had heard the shot that killed his brother and had come forth shooting, pushing a small desk before him as a barricade. The man in the derby had forgotten, in the press of the moment, to take the youngest Springer's gun-belt. Now he had only four shells left to him. He was a conservative, cautious type, and so he hid down behind a counter and awaited his moment.

Philip Springer slowly, laboriously, pushed his desk barricade toward the street door, firing intermittently. At last the shattered desk was wedged against the partly opened door, and Springer, hiding his long-limbed figure behind one corner of it, waited desperately to spring past it into the street, toward the horses and safety.

Fumes from the dynamite blast made the hot little room acrid. Loosened plaster cracked and fell from the walls and ceiling to the floor with flat little spats of sound. The small man in the derby chewed philosophically at his tobacco cud, and waited.

Philip Springer's nerve control gave way; he fired four shots in quick succession, leaped around the desk shoulder toward the open space of the door. Just as he came erect the small man shot him dead.

HIPE FERRISS locked four badly drunken and still bellicose punchers in the four small cells of the jail, picked up his lantern and went across the street to the "Montana Moon" saloon. The barkeeper, still bloodied and rumpled and now more than a little drunk, was in the third recountal of his story. He stopped when big Ferriss shouldered toward him.

"Tell us about the *hombre* again, John," ordered Ferriss, who had been rather busy since his return from the Goyo *fiesta*. Willingly and with unction, the barkeeper obeyed.

"A small, quiet-lookin' jasper. Come on the morning through train. Caught the 8:10 eastbound freight out just an hour ago. Said he knew you, Hipe—he was lookin' fer yuh—an' said he come from New York. What'd I say he said he was? Yeah—a reporter; workin' on a newspaper in New York."

"Wait a minute," said Hipe Ferriss, a slow, bewildered smile on his face, and went across the street, the barkeeper and the returned *fiesta* revelers after him. In the dingy office of the sheriff the four Springer brothers lay stiffly side by side. Stooping down, lantern in hand, Ferriss examined them again. Young Chet, with his boots off—he wouldn't like that if he knew—the deep, blue finger-marks still on his brown throat. Mike, with a bullet-hole behind the right ear. Harry, with a bullet-hole between the eyes. Tough old Phil, with a bullet-hole at the base of his brain. All three through the head . . .

Hipe Ferriss straightened up.

"Yes," he said aloud, more to himself than to the craning, wondering group about him; "that's his work, all right."

"Whose?" demanded the barkeeper, in his rôle of historian.

"Bat's—Bat Masterton's. He wrote me a coupla months back he was comin' out fer a visit—an' I forgot." He wheeled around on the slack-mouthed barkeeper. "Didn't you recognize him—a jasper like you who's been grazin' out here all yer life?"

The barkeeper swallowed, ejaculated finally:

"Rec'nize him? Why, Mike Springer didn't hisself! Rec'nize Bat Masterton? Why, good gosh, Hipe, he was wearin' one o' them derby hats!"

How to Detect a Murderer

TOUCHING the body of a murdered person was one way, in England, Scotland, and elsewhere, of discovering who the murderer was. The practice, we are informed, originated in Denmark. Certain gentlemen in that kingdom, being together in a house one evening, fell out among themselves, and from words came to blows. The candles went out during the fray, and before lights could be procured one of the gentlemen was stabbed. The murderer was unknown. Christernus II, the king, in order to discover the murderer, commanded that all who had been present at the brawl should stand around the dead body, and that one after the other should lay his right hand on the dead man's breast and swear that he had not committed the foul deed. The gentlemen complied, and no sign appeared to indicate the guilt of any of them until the king's pursuivant kissed the feet of the corpse and laid his hand on the breast. As he did so, blood gushed out from the wound and the nostrils. Thus condemned, the pursuivant confessed his guilt, and by the king's sentence was beheaded.

The Horror of the Height

By SIDNEY HORLER

Has the sinister art of black magic been revived, or has it never really been stamped out—has it remained a subtle, destroying force since the days of its medieval supremacy? There are those who repudiate all evidence as to its existence—yet there are others, as this story indicates, who still fear it as a living reality.

"MY FRIEND and assistant, Mr. Martin Huish," announced Sebastian Quin.

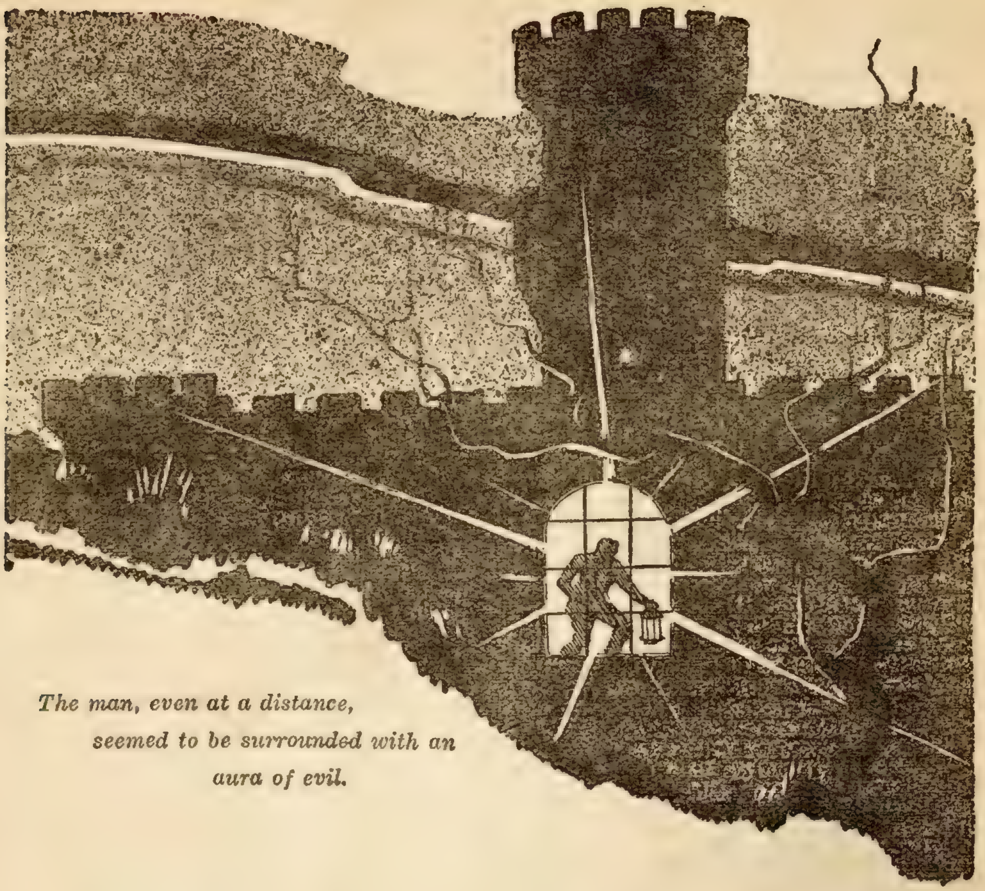
I acknowledged the introduction by bowing to the girl who sat in the client's chair in Quin's consulting-room. She was about twenty-four, I judged, tastefully dressed and normally very pretty. I say normally, because Violet Loring's face was now tortured by a look of restrained horror, which went straight to my heart.

"Miss Loring has come to us in great—very great—trouble," explained Quin. "She was about to tell me her story when you came in."

He looked encouragingly at the girl, whose hands were locked. Quite obviously, she had to brace herself before she could start on her narrative.

"What I am going to tell you, Mr. Quin, may sound so fantastic, so utterly preposterous, that you will have difficulty, perhaps, in believing I am sane myself." She stopped, unable for a minute to go on.

"I may say I have listened to



The man, even at a distance, seemed to be surrounded with an aura of evil.

many strange statements in my time, Miss Loring; and my experience of life is that the fantastic is usually the likeliest thing to happen—given certain conditions."

THE tone was grave but encouraging. Sebastian Quin, his thin, almost cadaverous face thrust forward, was an impressive figure in that moment. His critics, whose scoffings were in every case occasioned by bitter jealousy, might say that he looked more like a jockey than a crime investigator, but the visitor evidently derived satisfaction from his manner.

"I live at Trevelyn in Cornwall," she continued, gaining courage. "As you know, it is a popular seaside resort in the summer, but in the winter it is very lonely and desolate. Yet my father and I have been happy—he with his books and I with my sports and out-of-doors life—until the last few months. All this trouble has happened since"—she shuddered—"that man came!"

"What man?" inquired Quin.

"The man Memory—Rathin Memory, he calls himself."

"A singular name," commented Quin. "And what——"

"He's horrible, dreadful!" cried the visitor. "Mr. Quin, help me to save my father from that devil's power!"

Violet Loring's face had become convulsed. She was struggling for breath.

Sebastian Quin made me a sign, and I brought the brandy.

After a while the visitor became more controlled.

"I must tell you everything now," she said, "and I promise I shall not be so foolish again." Her hands locked tightly, she went straight on with her story.

"It was in late September last that this man, Rathin Memory, arrived in Trevelyn. He took the house called 'The Height,' on Pentire, which is a rocky headland jutting into the sea on the north side of the town. This house had been unoccupied for so long that the place was in a dreadful state of neglect. The iron entrance gates were rusty and almost hidden by the weeds and coarse grass which had been allowed to grow.

"I should explain that this house, The Height, has an evil reputation —the local story is that a dreadful murder and suicide took place there many years ago, that the bodies of the wretched people mysteriously disappeared in the night, and that the place—which is very old—is haunted. And it was to this house that the man who, for some mysterious reason, has constituted himself my enemy came." The visitor's body was shaken by a fresh shudder before she continued:

"You can imagine, perhaps, what an interest is taken in the new resident. Everybody in Trevelyn knows everybody else, the town being so small, and the fact that Rathin Memory has taken a house which is generally believed to be haunted and which has never been let even in the summer months, has increased the natural curiosity about the man."

Quin nodded.

"Will you describe him, Miss Loring?"

Again the visitor shuddered. But the hesitation was only momentary.

"Please do not think it is my shattered nerves which make me describe him as a man one doesn't like to look at," she replied. "His age is something between forty and fifty, I should say; he is very hairy —lets his hair grow long and has a beard—and has remarkable eyes. Even when he has passed me in the street in broad daylight his eyes have filled me with fear. And I am not an imaginative person usually."

"A highly curious individual, I should imagine. But please go on, Miss Loring. Is anything known of the man—where he came from, for instance?"

"NOTHING very much. The local newspaper tried to interview him, but all he would say was that he had been a traveler all over the world, that he had lately arrived from Tibet, and that he wished to be undisturbed. He lives quite alone in that huge house, with only a foreign man-servant."

"He has done no entertaining, then?"

"None. As a matter of fact, there isn't a soul in Trevelyn who would venture into The Height. And the man himself—as I know to my cost —is mysterious, devilish. He has a power over people, as I shall convince you, I believe, Mr. Quin."

Quin almost imperceptibly stiffened in his chair.

"I shall do everything I can to help you, Miss Loring, but I must have your complete story."

"You shall—whatever it costs me to tell it. Perhaps you will be able to realize my position better if I say now that this—this monster is in love with me! And I am already engaged to be married," she went on before either Sebastian Quin or I could interject a comment.

"It was about a month ago that I first met Memory alone," Miss Loring explained. "I was walking on Pentire when I heard a footstep behind me. Looking around, I saw that the mystery man—as Memory is called in Trevelyn—was close upon me. Although it was early in the afternoon and quite light, I felt myself suddenly trembling. That may seem a very weak and cowardly confession to make, but I cannot hope to convey the devilish atmosphere with which the man seems to be surrounded! I only know that it was very real to me when he looked at me with those awful staring eyes of his.

"I MERELY nodded when he raised his hat, and went to pass on. But he placed himself in my way.

"'You are Miss Loring, are you not?' he asked, and I said: 'Yes.'

"'I should like you to be friends with me,' he went on. 'I am a very lonely man. I do not want many friends, but I should like to know you.'

"You can imagine, Mr. Quin, what my feelings were when I heard those words. For a moment I could not find my voice. But then, realizing my position, I replied: 'I am afraid that is impossible. I do not know you, and I do not want to know you. Consequently, any question of friendship between us is absurd.'

"Once again I made to move on, but he would not let me pass.

"'That which I desire I always obtain,' he said in a voice that filled me with fresh fear. 'I have asked for your friendship, and I shall have it. There is no one strong enough to prevent me.'

"At that I became indignant.

"'My father will prevent it, for one,' I said.

"'Your father!' He laughed contemptuously. 'I tell you that no one is strong enough to prevent me from enjoying your friendship now that I wish it. You will see!'

"If he had not turned away then, I believe I should have struck him, for my rage had overcome my fear. The idea of this creature's daring to dictate to me, presuming to force himself upon me, was so overwhelming that I scarcely knew what I was doing.

"I went straight back and told my father. Dad is usually a quiet man, whose only wish is to be left in peace to enjoy his beloved books, but when he heard my story he went straight away to consult his solicitor. Mr. Denning wrote a letter to Memory, warning him that his attentions were unwelcome to me, that I was already engaged to be married, and that any repetition of his conduct of that afternoon would be communicated without delay to the local police. The local police," repeated the visitor in a hopeless voice. "Little did I realize at the time how helpless any police could be in dealing with a monster like Memory!"

HER strange words filled me with a sense of foreboding. I glanced at Quin, and saw that his eyes were unnaturally bright. Evidently this case was interesting him intensely.

Before she continued, Miss Loring took another sip of brandy.

"The following night the first terrible thing happened," she resumed. "My father had gone to bed early, but I had been sitting with my—the man to whom I am engaged, Mr. Harry Sinclair. Suddenly I heard a cry. I rushed upstairs, Harry by my side. I found my father——" Sobs now choked her so that she could not continue.

"If you are too distressed, Miss Loring——"

"No! No! I must tell it and get it over. I was saying that I found my father—*paralyzed!* He could speak, but that was all. He said he had cried out because he felt a strange numbness creeping over him, robbing him of all strength and power.

"No"—answering my look; "my father had not been stricken with any stealthy disease; neither had he had a stroke. The local doctor was puzzled, and sent for a specialist from Plymouth. The latter in turn wired for a big London man—Sir Timothy Brash——"

"I know him well," commented Quin. "He is a member of the same club as I. A thoroughly good man; about as good as any in the world, I should say. What did Sir Timothy say, Miss Loring?"

The girl's body was shaken by one of those convulsive shudders which were so distressing to see.

"IT was Sir Timothy who referred me to you, Mr. Quin. After examining poor Daddy, he said that it was a case outside of medical science, because, as far as he could determine, there was no physical cause for Father's condition. Although not a robust man—but then Daddy has never been that—he said my father was wonderfully healthy and well preserved for his age. When I first heard him mention your name I thought you were still another doctor——"

"Naturally," was the grave comment.

"And to be frank, Mr. Quin, while of course I was anxious to do anything—*anything*—which could make Daddy better, I was so disappointed that I did not act at once upon his advice. You are not a doctor, Mr. Quin?"

"No—only of the mind," replied my friend. "I can tell you why Sir Timothy Brash mentioned my name to you, Miss Loring. He considered that your father's illness was due to another agency rather than disease."

"What agency, Mr. Quin?"

"That I cannot say with certainty until I reach the spot. Huish, look up the next train to Trevelyn. We shall return with Miss Loring. There is not a moment to lose!"

I consulted the Bradshaw and looked at my watch.

"There is a train from Paddington in an hour's time."

"We will catch it," said Quin decisively.

In the train Miss Loring told the rest of her amazing story. The malignant influence which was at work in her life had manifested itself in another direction besides rendering her father a helpless cripple. Harry Sinclair, her devoted lover, the man to whom she was engaged, had suddenly seemed to become bereft of his senses, to lose his reason.

"Not that he has become actually mad," explained the girl, "but he regards me now more or less as a stranger, and he spends all his time mooning about on the sands. His manner has become so peculiar that he is the talk of the town, and people are saying that—that he ought to be taken away. Mr. Quin"—stretching out a beautiful hand in anguished appeal—"do you think you will be able to help me?"

"I shall do all I can," was the grave response. "I promise you not to leave Trevelyn until the mystery is solved, in any case."

"WHAT is your view, Quin?" He turned on me impatiently.

"I have no view at present," he replied. "There may be a filmy thought hovering at the back of my mind, but it is far too early to speak about that yet. All I can say now, Huish, is that we are faced with a problem that has so many terrors attached to it that we simply must not fail! Even the thought of failure is so ghastly as to terrify me!"

I knew better than to provoke him into further speech at that moment, although God knows how anxious I was. The story which had brought us post-haste from London to this dreary Cornish coast town, now in the middle of winter so indescribably lonesome as to be almost eery in itself, would have seemed incredible had I not been mixed up sufficiently in Sebastian Quin's affairs to know from experience that, to quote the words he had himself said to the victim of this diabolical plot, "the fantastic is usually the likeliest thing to happen—given certain conditions."

I looked at the man who had solved more mysteries than any other person living. He was so deep in thought over his pipe that there was a deep furrow in his forehead.

Sebastian Quin was an enthusiast of the bizarre. He was as unlike the ordinary crime investigator as the real detective is unlike the fiction variety. Possessed of comfortable means, he devoted his life to the study of crime in its more exotic and weird manifestations. He was a repository of so much varied knowledge that I often marveled how and by what means he could have accumulated so many facts, knowing that he was still under forty. Quin had learned Chinese well enough to pass for a native within a week, and could speak altogether eighteen languages. That in itself gives proof of his mental powers.

He was far more than a mere detector of crime: he was a dissector, an analyst, an anatomist of the mind of the criminal. He was never satisfied with merely stopping a crime; he delved beneath and learned what had prompted the crime. Altogether an amazing person, and my friendship with him was the greatest honor that I—or any other man—could have experienced. It pleased Quin to let me accompany him on certain of his investigations. The part I played was always an exceedingly humble one—I was merely a super on the stage; but Quin, like many other great men, had his moments of pardonable vanity, and he liked to have some one near him to whom he could explain and expound after a "case" had come to a satisfactory conclusion.

WE HAD decided upon the Grand because it was the hotel nearest to The Height—that mysterious house in which Rathin Memory lived; and, late as it was after we had seen Violet Loring safely to her own door, Quin had walked the half-mile of desolate cliff-land which separated the Grand Hotel from The Height.

I shall never forget that walk. The wind had sprung up and was howling like the spirits of tortured fiends; every now and then the thundering of giant waters sounded, and we were drenched with spray as we walked along the zigzag path that ran between the golf course and the towering range of cliffs.

"This should be the place," Quin remarked, flashing the small electric torch he carried.

We climbed the mighty headland which Violet Loring had called Pentire, and a laborious business it was. A strange and erratic mind it must have been that conceived the idea of building a house on the top of that cliff which jutted straight out into the Atlantic Ocean. Like the nest of some gigantic eagle The Height looked as we stood before the iron gates which were rusty with disuse and almost hidden—as Violet Loring had said—by rank weeds and grasses as tall as a man's body.

The place was a monstrous blot of gloom. Not a light showed. There was no sign of any human habitation, and yet—I told myself it was fancy brought on by the story which had brought us to this spot at eleven o'clock of a winter's night—something seemed to grip me by the throat as I stood staring there in the darkness.

"Quin!" I called, and then was ashamed of myself.

My companion came up and looked at me fixedly.

"What is it?" he demanded.

I tried to laugh, but succeeded only in making a dismal croak.

"I—I can't explain it, Quin," I stammered, "but just then—when I called, I mean—something devilish seemed to be trying to choke the life out of me! It had me by the throat. I was afraid for myself and for you, too—that was why I called. Don't laugh at me!" I went on angrily. "The sensation was real enough—too real for my liking."

Quin switched off his torch.

"I am not going to laugh," he replied seriously. "I had exactly the same feeling myself—and you would not call me an unduly imaginative man, Huish?"

"I should not!" I said emphatically.

Sebastian Quin was silent as we walked away.

THE whole affair was steeped in mystery—evil mystery. On the morning following our arrival we saw David Loring, the girl's father. He was a pitiable object. Apart from the fact that he could speak, he was a complete paralytic. But his mind was clear enough.

"I am under the spell of some devilish influence," he told Quin. "That may seem an incomprehensible thing to you—and on the other hand, you may accept the statement because I understand you have had many strange experiences yourself, Mr. Quin. Dr. Logan will tell you the exact words that Sir Timothy Brash, the great consultant, said when he examined me."

Sebastian Quin, nodding gravely, took the gray-haired local practitioner on one side.

"From a medical point of view," said Dr. Logan, "Mr. Loring ought to be as well as you or I. He has been overhauled inside and out; all sorts of tests were made by Sir Timothy Brash, who said at the end: 'Well, the whole thing is incomprehensible from a medical point of view.' Poor Mr. Loring himself talks a lot about some malign influence, but of course all that is nonsense. This is not the Middle Ages."

"It may or it may not be nonsense," replied Sebastian Quin.

A SHORT time after this we met Harry Sinclair, Violet Loring's fiancé, as he was about to enter the house. He proved to be a good-looking, manly young fellow—at least, I should perhaps say he would no doubt have given that impression in ordinary circumstances.

Now he did not appear to be in possession of all his faculties. His mind was wandering, and he was so careless in his attire that I noticed a flush of pain come into Violet Loring's face.

As for Sinclair, he stared blankly at her, and glared around at the rest of us.

"Harry, this is Mr. Sebastian Quin, from London," the girl announced.

Again she received a disconcerting, blank stare.

"Who are you? Why do you keep on speaking to me? Leave me alone!" the man said fretfully, and then a look of loathsome cunning transfigured his face as he added: "But I know who you are! You're David Loring's daughter. You're a bad lot, and I don't want anything to do with you! It's your father I want—I'm very fond of your father!" He chuckled obscenely.

A sob sounded behind me.

"You can see for yourselves," said Violet Loring, her distress racking her, "that this is not my Harry: This is some monster he has been changed into!"

While I tried to comfort her, Sebastian Quin had stepped between Sinclair and the door of the Lorings' house.

"I shouldn't go in now," he said quietly to the stricken man.

The wave of madness which made Sinclair's eyes glare and his whole body stiffen died down as suddenly as it was born when he looked into Quin's face. With a snarl like that of an angry dog, he turned on his heel and walked rapidly away without saying another word.

For the rest of that day Quin kept a close watch on the Lorings' home, and, noticing how tense and strung-up he was, I ventured to ask him the reason.

"You may know to-night," was the only reply he would give me.

"AH!" cried Sebastian Quin softly, yet with intense satisfaction. "There it is!"

He pointed upward. The left wing of The Height took the form of a short, squat tower, and it was from a window in this tower that a light—the first sign of human life or activity in the place that we had yet observed—now glowed like a star in a dark sky.

"Our vigil is ended," said Quin. "What we have to do now is to ascertain what is going on in that room with the light. The question is whether we shall achieve that purpose by entering the house, or whether we can sufficiently satisfy our curiosity by climbing up this incline which is on a level with the window, and looking through by lying on our stomachs. I propose the latter method, for it will be quicker, and I feel pretty certain that time is valuable. Now for the climb. Be careful you don't fall!"

We were already standing beneath the shadow of the house of mystery. My heart beat at twice its normal rate when I contemplated the task which Quin had set us.

The progress of that hazardous climb, one false step in which would have meant not only the ruination of our plans, but inevitably death, is a memory upon which I never afterward liked to look back. It seemed to last an eternity, but eventually I found myself lying side by side with Quin upon the small plateau, and looking into the room the light from which had attracted us from the ground. There were some curtains to the window, but the man inside had evidently felt so secure in his own mind about not being overseen, that he had not troubled to draw them.

"Stay perfectly still, and do not do anything until I give you the word, *whatever you may see!*" whispered my companion, stressing the last few words in a way that sent a cold chill down my spine.

EVERY separate nerve in my body seemed to be twitching as I saw a man enter the room. By the description which Violet Loring had given us, I recognized him at once as Rathin Memory.

She had not exaggerated the dread with which this man would have inspired the ordinary clean-living, clean-thinking, normal person. The man, even from a distance, seemed to be surrounded by an aura of evil.

"Watch!" came the tense whisper from Quin.

Memory was carrying a bundle when he entered the room, which as far as I could see was quite bare of furniture. Placing the bundle on the floor, he first took out five brass lamps of a peculiar design. Then followed a stoppered vessel. After that the man produced a white cock, alive—for it struggled—but with its feet and beak tied in some fashion that I could not ascertain because I was too far away. Then followed a knife, the blade of which gleamed in the light.

"What——?" I whispered, but Quin ordered me to be quiet.

I FOLLOWED the subsequent actions of the man in the lighted room with breathless attention, for I realized that I was the witness of something which was full of significance—otherwise why should Sebastian Quin have been so absorbed?

I saw Rathin Memory measure out a space. Having counted off a number of feet—how many I could not reckon—he drew a circle of chalk. Then, taking the bottle, he pulled out the stopper and walked around inside the circle, sprinkling the chalk line with the liquid the bottle contained. At each step he stopped and made a peculiar gesture.

"The second sign of the unholy celebration," I heard Quin mutter.

The complete circle having been sprinkled, the man inside drew a five-pointed star with the chalk. Then, lighting the five small lamps which he had brought, he placed one at each of the five points. He seemed to be muttering some ritual as he did so, for I could see his lips move.

Placing himself in the center of the pentacle, he commenced what must have been a chant, for his lips moved again and his hands swept upward and outward. Presently the uncanny thing which I had been expecting ever since I had first looked into the room happened—for from each of the five lamps guarding the points of the pentacle there suddenly sprang a reddish tongue of flame. These met and formed a solid barrier of fire around the man in the center.

At this point Memory thrust out his hand and seized the white cock. Holding the knife aloft as though first consecrating it to its task, he decapitated the bird with a single stroke, and I saw the blood splash on the floor inside the circle.

"Now that the blood is warm——" I heard Sebastian Quin mutter, but I was too fascinated by the horrible ritual I was witnessing to turn to him.

I saw the unholy celebrant lift up his hands as though saying a prayer. As he did so, the wall of flame with which he had been surrounded died down. Five tongues of flame issued out of the solid fire and returned to the lamps which burned at the five points of the pentacle. The light of the lamps now burned low, flickering just as though assailed by a gale of wind. They were trembling as though some unseen force were trying to put them out.

"My God!" breathed Quin. "The real thing—the real thing!"

Again I was too absorbed to take any notice of my companion.

Spellbound I saw—or fancied I saw—a gray cloud beat about the figure of the man in the circle of the pentacle. I saw Rathin Memory's lips move again.

"Quickly!" A grip of steel was on my arm, and a voice that brooked no denial sounded in my ear.

"Huish, get back to the Lorings' house at once! Murder may be done there at any moment! Go at once—I must stay here. Go, man!"

So strong was his control over me at that moment that I did not hesitate. I moved like a man in a dream, for the dreadful images I had seen were vivid in my mind—but I must have moved quickly, for within a surprisingly short space of time I found myself in the garden and climbing over the high wall that separated it from the cliff-land.

ONCE on the other side, I took to my heels like a man pursued by fiends. But I was not frightened. My one idea was to get to the Lorings' cottage as quickly as possible.

Though it was long past midnight when I arrived there, I hammered at the door loudly enough to wake the dead.

But I was in the house long before the door could be opened. Going around to the side, I saw a ladder placed against a bedroom window. In a flash the realization came to me that this led to David Loring's room.

Rushing up the ladder, I flung myself through the window—just in time to prevent a man from plunging a knife into the breast of the sleeping paralytic.

"Sinclair!" I cried. "What the devil are you doing here?"

I had hold of his wrist, and the knife clattered to the floor. And although he struggled like the madman he was, I was desperate myself, and ruthless. Getting clear, I swung a right to his jaw that carried every ounce I had in my body, and he crumpled helpless across the bed of the man he had intended to murder.

"What's the matter? Why—I can move! I'm better! I'm well!"

This night of strangeness was to hold another mystery. Imagine my amazement when David Loring, a hopeless paralytic the short time I had known him, jumped out of bed and came across to me!

"I'm well! I'm cured!" he cried, tears running down his cheeks.

Swift footsteps were heard outside before I could find any words, and the next moment Violet Loring rushed into the room.

"Daddy!"

She had been in his arms for several seconds before she seemed to realize that any one else was in the room.

Then——

"Mr. Huish! . . . *Harry!*" she cried.

As she spoke his name her lover sat up and rubbed his eyes.

"Vi! I've had such a horrible dream! What am I doing here?" he said.

IT WAS not until Sebastian Quin and I were ensconced cozily before our sitting-room fire at the Grand Hotel that I regained my normality. The mysteries I had seen following so quickly one upon the other that night had been too much for me to grasp.

"For Heaven's sake, Quin, explain matters — everything!" I snapped. This was 1928, and I was tired of trying to probe things to which there appeared to be no earthly explanation. Paralyzed men suddenly jumping out of bed . . . madmen becoming sane through a blow on the jaw . . . tongues of flame . . . slaughtered cocks . . .

"I have already told you that Rathin Memory is dead," said Quin. "Exactly how he died is too horrible to relate, but, briefly, the evil forces which he conjured up by means of the black magic you saw to-night, and which he had used to work evil upon two other men—to paralyze David Loring and to make Harry Sinclair mad—destroyed him. Once I had wrecked the five guarding lamps of the pentacle, which I did with my revolver shortly after you had left, he was no longer safe. And the spell which he had caused to be cast upon Loring and Sinclair was broken. The devils which he could control as long as those lamps served as protection seized him. I heard one short, strangled scream of dreadful horror, and I knew it was over."

While I stared at him in speechless amazement, Quin continued: "If you told the ordinary person that Black Magic was practised in England to-day, you would be thought a lunatic; but the fact is true, as you have yourself had proof, Huish. I had my suspicions that this man Rathin Memory was an adept in the unholy art when I first heard Miss Loring's story, but it was too early for me to give any opinion on the matter until I had myself seen him at the actual practice."

"But that gray shape, Quin?"

"Was one or more spirits of evil—devils, if you care for the usual superstitious term. It is too technical a matter for me to explain now at length, but there is no doubt that the rites of Black Magic have been carefully preserved and handed down. The Egyptians unquestionably had the power to raise evil spirits and use them for purposes of personal vengeance. And have you not read how Madame de Montespan consulted a witch and took part in a Black Mass with the notorious Abbé Guibourg, so that she might win back the love of Louis the Fourteenth of France? Indeed, there is evidence enough!

"In Tibet to-day spirit-raising is practised in its most elaborate and secret forms. That was what first gave me the idea that this man Memory was an adept—the news that he had recently returned from that land of weird and uncanny mystery. And now"—yawning—"I'm off to bed. What do you say?"

I also went to bed—but I could not sleep.

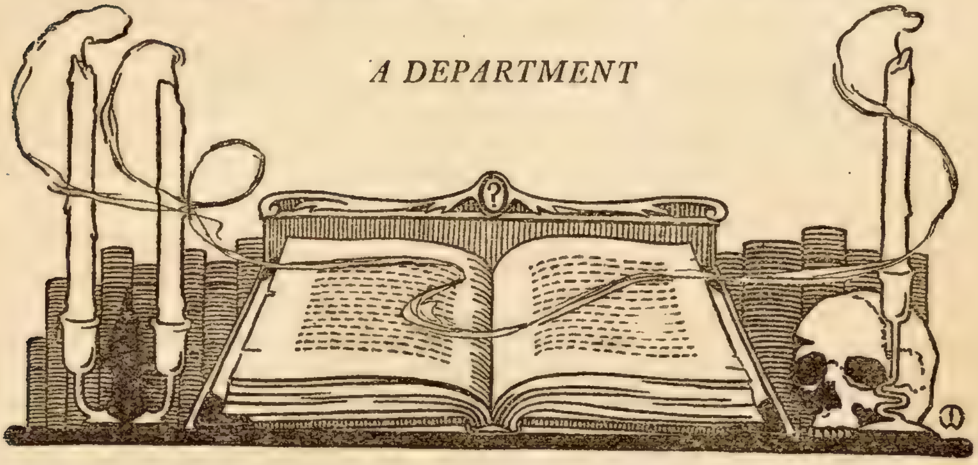
Horrible Love Charm of the Ancient Irish

PHILTERS, love powders, and charms to procure affection were frequently used in Ireland, and the belief in them existed from the most ancient times.

Some of these charms were very gruesome. The most awful one of all was known as the "dead strip." Girls have been known to go to a graveyard at night, exhume a corpse nine days buried, and tear down a strip of the skin from head to foot. This they would tie around the leg or the arm of the man they loved while he was asleep, taking care to remove it before he waked. It was believed that as long as the girl kept such a strip in her possession, hidden from all eyes, she would retain the devotion of her lover.

The Most Mysterious Happening of My Life

A DEPARTMENT



Each month MYSTERY STORIES will print letters of five hundred words or less, telling of the strange experiences of our readers.

These experiences need not be of the occult type, but they must have a strong element of mystery, and their truthfulness must be vouched for by the authors.

For each letter published we shall send the writer five dollars.

An Appeal to Friendship

By MRS. FRANKLIN HARRIS

THERE are certain places on this earth where the veil between the seen and the unseen seems very thin, as in the remote mountain country where I have spent many of my summers.

Almost immediately after we came into possession of our place, inexplicable things began to occur. At long intervals before that, and more particularly when I was a young girl at home, I had had experiences of a psychic character, but it seemed as though in this mountain valley, far from the busy drive of modern life, I had come within easier reach of this order of influences.

One evening I was lying in bed—I slept on the porch in fine weather—gazing up into the branches of a huge maple tree that grew at the corner of the house. Suddenly in the heart of the tree I saw the figure of a woman, holding out a baby as if she were offering it to me. Although the faces were not clear, the shapes and general outline, the whole intention of her gesture, were unmistakable. For several minutes I lay looking at this strange visitant, not frightened—I am never frightened when I see a vision of this nature, outside the limits of what ordinary experience calls possible or real—but deeply impressed and moved, as well as puzzled to understand the meaning of what I saw.

In the morning, the first thing on waking, I told my husband of the figure in the tree.

About an hour after breakfast I received a telegram from a friend, saying that she was about to undergo a dangerous operation, and that, although there was no time to consult me, she was sending me her baby to care for, as there was no one else to whom she could trust the child. That same day her husband arrived and left the baby with me.

My friend was critically ill for several weeks after the operation, during which time I of course cared for her baby with thankfulness that she had wished me to do so. And I was glad that the child was too young to share the anxiety felt by his father and me.

Afterward she told me of her terrible suffering of that night when she faced the prospect of the operation, knowing that her husband, whose profession made sudden demands on him and took him out of town at unforeseen times, could not possibly give the delicate little boy the care he needed. Lack of money made impossible for her the easy solutions of rich people, but even could she have hired trained nurses for the immediate emergency, she had before her eyes the possibility that she might die under the operation. How could she bear to leave her sensitive baby to any hands but loving ones?

She told me what relief—hope that was almost certainty—flooded her when she thought of me as her baby's one salvation in case of her death. She had visited me in the mountains, and the picture of the beautiful, peaceful place rose before her eyes that night. She could leave the baby happily there, in my arms, and feel secure.

The Death Battle

By MRS. W. L. ENGLISH

DOWN close to the Ozarks, in a city of Missouri, there stands far back from the unused lane an old, graystone house. Magnificent in its structure and surrounded by low, murmuring trees, it is at once picturesque and a bit gloomy. Gloomy, because it must always stand lonely and alone—shunned by all who pass that way, and spoken of in awesome whispers.

It is haunted. I know, for my husband and I had the misfortune to live there one day and one night. When we, strangers in town, rented the house and moved in, we were blissfully ignorant of its history. For some strange reason no one saw fit to enlighten us until we had moved out again. I shall tell our experience there that night as simply and as briefly as I can. But I can only write of what actually happened—I cannot explain the mystery thoroughly.

Early in the evening we noticed a huge blood-stain on the floor of the front hall, just at the foot of the wide, polished staircase, and we wondered about its significance. Later we were to *know* how it had come to be there.

It was fall, and the weather was chilly My husband built a fire in the old-fashioned fireplace in the living-room. We were sitting together before its cheerful blaze, conversing, when from the room just over the front hall there came a loud crash, and then a violent noise—as though a furious battle were being waged. The ceiling of the hall creaked and trembled. We sat there terrified, spellbound, for we knew that outside of ourselves no living person was in the house. Then, as suddenly as the noise had begun, it ceased, and a dead silence reigned—except for a steady drip-drip-drip that persisted until we thought it would drive us distracted. We closed the door that led out into the hall and locked it securely. The rest of the night we spent huddled before the fireplace, awaiting the dawn.

On the following day the story of the haunted house was revealed to us. Two men, it seemed, had fought in the room above the hall, and one had mortally stabbed the other through the heart. The blood of the victim had seeped through the ceiling, forming the stain at the foot of the stairs. It is believed that each night that death battle is fought over again. And always it is followed by the steady sound of blood seeping through the ceiling and dropping there at the foot of the stairs.

Changeling Children

THE belief that dwarfs or gnomes, dwelling in the innermost parts of the earth, carry off beautiful new-born babies and leave their own deformed offspring in their stead, is not confined to any one people, but is current alike in many countries of Europe, and causes a misshapen child to be looked upon with suspicion, subjected to cruel tortures, and even killed. The supposed changeling is often severely beaten with juniper rods and the scourging attended with incantations, so as to compel the wicked fairies to reclaim their deformed youngster and restore the stolen child. Cases of this kind were common in Ireland in our grandparents' day. One Magoney, for instance, an Irish peasant, had a sickly child, which the most careful nurture failed to restore to health and strength. The parents, therefore. became convinced that a changeling had been imposed upon them, and when the boy was four years old they resolved to have recourse to boiling water, in which he was kept, notwithstanding his shrieks that he was not an elf, but their own Johnny Magoney, until death released him from his torments.

The Mystery Club

A DEPARTMENT

If you've ever had a desire to write mystery stories—and there are few of us who haven't—this is the department for you.

Every month Everard Jason, the Mystery Man, presents the synopsis of an original mystery story — but he doesn't give the solution of the mystery involved. That is left to you.

Here's a chance to try out your ingenuity and your plot-making ability.

And if you send in one of the three answers that, in the opinion of the editors, are the best, you'll get as a prize one of the splendid new mystery books listed elsewhere in this department.

WHEN Everard Jason entered the office we thought that he seemed depressed. His usually high spirits were conspicuously absent. Instead of the flower he invariably wore in his coat lapel, there was only a leaf or two of what we assumed to be some strange Oriental weed; and when we ventured to approach his gloom indirectly by inquiring about the odd boutonnière, he shook his head and sighed.

"It does resemble a Javanese jungle growth," said he, without acknowledging he had never been in the jungles of Java, "but it is really plucked from a century plant, an heirloom in my family, which has reached its one hundred and ninth year, poor thing, and has not bloomed."

To cheer him up, we spoke of the Mystery Club and his latest problem.

"It is an excellent problem," said he, "but it has no answer."

"But we must have an answer, you know."

"Must we? Well, then, I suppose thought in this instance is obligatory," he said with a kind of quiet resignation. He sat and thought for perhaps twelve or thirteen minutes, and then handed over the problem and a really original answer. Here is the problem:

Problem Number Seven

THE MYSTERY OF THE FANTASTIC ESCAPE

Bill Lane is entirely sane, though very eccentric. He has been confined in an asylum for more than a year. He has neither wealth nor influence, and his case offers no singular public appeal. Bill is not at all violent, and is permitted a degree of freedom in going about the asylum grounds, so that in arranging for his own liberation he makes uses of such strange articles as come easily to hand in his plight.

What fantastic escape might Bill contrive, or how might he win his permanent release from the asylum, by employing not less than two and not more than six of the following items?

Snow shoes, a prayer rug, a tame lizard, a safety razor, a bottle of pickles, two dog muzzles, a dog house, a length of chain, a spade, a slice of ham, six rusty nails, a tooth-brush, a box of washing powder, a billiard cue, a bottle of heavy cream, an old sewing-machine, a broken lawn-mower, a keg of crude oil, two inner tubes, a cash-register, toothpicks, a small ship's anchor, one dozen eggs, a rubber coat, a garden-hose, a seed catalogue.

Talk about cross-word puzzles! It seems to us that this problem of our old friend's beats them hollow in every way. You'll certainly have to work to solve this one, but it does allow all sorts of turns and twists for the inventive mind to follow.

Work out your solutions from the clues that have been given, and send your answers to The Mystery Club, care of Mystery Stories, 55 West 42d Street, New York, N. Y. They should be received at this address not later than April 5, 1928. No manuscripts can be returned.

The three answers that, in the judgment of the editors, are the best, will be published in the June issue. The answers do not need to be similar to that of Everard Jason. To each of the writers of these three solutions, the publishers of this magazine will send a book selected from the list of new publications given on this page.

The Old Dark House, by J. B. Priestley (*Harper & Brothers*).

The Dreadful Night, by Ben Ames Williams (*E. P. Dutton & Co.*).

Vivanti, by Sidney Horler (*Doubleday, Doran & Co., Inc.*).

The Voice of the Seven Sparrows, by H. C. Bailey (*E. P. Dutton & Co.*).

The Tick of the Clock, by Herbert Asbury (*Macy-Massius*).

2 L O, by Walter S. Masterman (*E. P. Dutton & Co.*).

Sinister House, by Charles G. Booth (*William Morrow & Co., Inc.*).

The Witness at the Window, by Charles Barry (*E. P. Dutton & Co.*).

The Octopus of Paris, by Gaston Leroux (*The Macaulay Co.*).

The Technique of the Mystery Story, by Carolyn Wells (*The Home Correspondence School*).

And now let us see what happened to that arch-villain Bendig at the crossroads. Below are given the three answers which in our estimation rank highest in solving The Mystery of the Gangster's Escape. This problem appeared in the February issue of this publication. The first solution is that of the Man of Mystery. The three others follow.

SOLUTION by EVERARD JASON

Bendig, the Illinois gang leader, determines to proceed by one or the other of the two roads ahead, in spite of his enemies' having covered both of them. He decides as follows:

He chooses the bad road—the one which is being repaired—because, though he cannot speed along it, there is no impediment to frustrate his passing, such as the overturned dray reported by the farmer on the better of the two roads.

He pays the farmer for his warning, and takes from him all his empty sacks. These Bendig, the farmer, and Bendig's two gangsters hastily fill with sand from the piles dotting the road under repair. Then they tie the sandbags around the sides of the touring-car, as a protection against the machine-gun bullets of the enemy. Thus fortified, Bendig, crouching low, steers his powerful car forward along the road which is being repaired—the one his enemies think he will avoid, and which they have not completely blockaded.

Solution by T. Y. Leo

c/o College Inn, 3100 Broadway, N. Y. C.

Introductory—The farmer's friendly tip does not dismay Bendig for a moment. As an experienced gang-chieftain, Bendig has plans galore to outmaneuver his foes. But, here and now, *he rejects practically all his plans, for the simple reason that each involves the necessity of his turning back, and the postponement of his important trip. To beat a retreat before his foes is not what the formidable Bendig bargains for.*

While casting about for a time-and-labor-saving plan, however daring, Bendig finds his eyes resting on the farmer's truck. Suddenly he gets out of his car and goes to examine the insides of the truck. Then for a minute he speaks to the farmer *sotto voce*, and hands him a roll of yellow and green backs.

Next, after questioning his henchmen, he has alterations done about his car. He makes one of his henchmen change his duds and lay down his hardware, whispers some instructions to him, and orders him to drive ahead in the car on the road under repair.

Bendig himself climbs into the farmer's truck with the other henchman, and they crouch down among the crates, with sacks thrown carelessly over them. The truck is then started, following leisurely far behind the car.

Miles beyond the gangsters' ambuscade the truck stops. Bendig and his henchman, emerging from it, step into a waiting show-car, welcomed by its chauffeur's broad smile.

NOTE — *On being questioned, the chauffeur replies: "Ya, they give the double O to the car, inside and out, its number plates, my license and myself; and all the time I give 'em the innocentest baby stare. Clearly they never seen me before. They mouth a lot among theirselves, shake their heads, an' tell me to drive on!*

"An' what trouble did they give youse?" he asked of the farmer.

"Oh, nothin' more'n exchanging nods an' good mornin' with them. Arsk if I seen Bendig. I point my thumb back over my shoulder, givin' the added info B seems abouta maka wide detour. They scurry back to their machine-guns and lookouts; and—here I am!"

Solution by John P. Vanderbol

General Delivery, Chualar, California.

Bendig and his assistants, aided by the farmer, rearrange the crates, forming four walls with a square space in the center. The lower part of this hiatus they line with sacks of sand from a nearby pile.

The farmer then produces a chain, and is soon towing the powerful touring-car along the road which is under construction. At the point of the machine-guns he is stopped and asked whether he has seen anything of Bendig and his companions.

"As I come along the road, dodging sand and gravel piles," he says, "I sees them jump from the car and cut across the field. 'Somethin' funny about this,' I says to myself. So I pulls the old boat this a-way to the next town."

The gangsters make a careful search of the touring-car, and venture a couple of probing shots through the crates. Then, satisfied that the farmer has told the truth, they permit him to proceed to the village. And soon thereafter, the danger-line being well passed, Bendig resumes the journey in his own car.

Solution by A. D. Schinnerer

Box 176, West Albany, New York

Bendig, after issuing orders and inducing the farmer to turn his car around, conceals his two companions beneath the empty sacks. He himself stays behind in his car, while the farmer drives back the way he came, safely passing the spot which conceals the waiting gangsters. Having rounded a bend in the road a short distance further on, Bendig's men alight and creep back, with rifles ready.

Peering over a small knoll which hides their advance, they find the enemy—the four rival gangsters—within easy rifle distance. Drawing the bead on the two gangsters, Bendig's men fire simultaneously. Each gets his man—and as the other two spring toward the machine-gun, the automatic rifles speak again, and the road is safe to pass.

Bendig, who has followed slowly in his car, rightly guessing the outcome of his stratagem, now arrives at the spot. Picking up his companions and their machine-gun trophies, he speeds onward to his destination.

THE following readers sent in answers that the editors feel entitle them to the rank of Detective Sergeant:

Stephen S. Maxson (two solutions), Minneapolis, Minn.; Gladys I. Koch, New York, N. Y.; Arthur W. Back, Worcester, Mass.; C. S. T., Brooklyn, N. Y.; Bonilyn M. Minger, Windsor, Ont., Canada; W. J. Campbell, Boggstown, Ind.; Charles L. Martin, Philadelphia, Pa.; Charles A. Cassidy, Houlton, Me.; W. W. Cameron, Roxbury, Mass.; J. P. G., Schenectady, N. Y.; Sidney Shapiro, Atlantic City, N. J.; Alford A. Crosby, Buffalo, N. Y.

We Tell Our Readers

THERE are people who seem to be under the impression that editors hire assistants for the express purpose of heading off promising new writers and keeping their stories from reaching the editorial desk

"It's a closed corporation," they will tell you. "No outsider has a chance."

Rot! Likewise piffle!

If this is the case, how did the present crop of established writers get their start? There may be one or two magazines that specialize in big names, but most editors are overjoyed to find really good stories among the mass of manuscripts sent in by unknowns. Such stories are readily accepted, and the authors are encouraged and helped to the best of the editor's ability. Any magazine that relied on a small group of authors to fill its pages would be foredoomed to failure. There would be too much sameness about the contents. Every publication needs new blood. There are reasons why we don't care to point out the new writers whose work has appeared in Mystery Stories, but there have been a number of them. You may have noticed names that you have not seen in other publications. Mystery Stories welcomes new authors—even those who have published nothing. Every story is accepted or rejected solely on its merits.

And now let us talk a little about those authors whose work is featured in the present number.

Ray Cummings, whose novelette, DOOM, opens the magazine this month is well-known to readers of popular magazines for his weird, pseudo-scientific stories. At the present time he is sojourning in Bermuda, and thinking up new and strange situations for stories which you will enjoy in days to come.

The two-part story, THE OTHER GLOVE, which begins in this issue, is by an old friend of Mystery Stories readers—*Leslie McFarlane.* He claims Montreal is one of the most colorful cities imaginable, and after reading this yarn we agree with him. There'll be more stories by this writer, of course.

H. M. Sutherland spent five years in the City Room of a New York newspaper, which is why the atmosphere in NO STORY seems so real. When he isn't busy with his literary work, Mr. Sutherland is giving most of his attention to following a couple of pointer pups through the woods and fields of Virginia, where he has gone to recover from wounds received in the Argonne.

You'd never believe, after reading THE HORROR OF THE HEIGHT, what a charming person *Sidney Horler* is. On his recent visit to this country from London, where he was born, he called in to see us and—although we expected him to begin working all sorts of Black Magic around the office and to upset us terribly—we discussed many things with him and found him a person any one would like to have for a friend. One of his recent books is listed as a "best seller."

Readers who remember *Mark Plum's* vivid tale, JOHN SMITH INTERFERES, will enjoy a new story by this writer—SNOW MEN.

Remember THE CLEVERNESS OF THE BARON DE CITTABOLA? *Murray Leinster,* who wrote that very funny mystery yarn, comes through again with another humorous tale, THE GREAT CANAL STREET ROBBERY. In our next issue we're going to show you this talented author's more serious side. After reading the story which he has written for this issue, you'll certainly not want to miss the tale by him, which you will find announced on page two.

Robert Carse is a born adventurer. He is also a story-teller who began early, for he got into the R. O. T. C. during the war by telling a good one. And he follows up this first success with his Western tale, THE GENT IN THE DERBY HAT, which appears in this issue.

To-day every one is interested in aviation, and that is why we asked *Orville H. Kneen* to write about the mysterious disappearances which have occurred in man's fight to conquer the air. In THE PORT OF MISSING AVIATORS he discusses in a most interesting manner those men and women who have started out on the great adventure and then disappeared so mysteriously from the sight of men.

Our Readers Tell Us

Every month we shall print on this page comments from our readers regarding the contents of MYSTERY STORIES.

For each letter which the Editor selects for publication the Publishers will send the writer Two Dollars.

Let us hear from you as soon as you have read this issue of the magazine. Write now!

DEAR EDITOR:

It is with pleasure that I accept your invitation to write from a reader's point of view upon the sort of stories that appear in your magazine. I believe that I can safely say that I have read every magazine of this nature that has been published in New York City in recent years. Considering all this, the six-foot loving cup, as the saying goes, is awarded to MYSTERY.

First and foremost I like Paul Ernst, who has a gift that MYSTERY readers should be proud of—the knack of creating a beautiful mystery story. (The last one I read was a pipe dream of Edgar Allan Poe's.) Of course, Harlow, Kingslyn, Baer—who is to be congratulated as a modern—and Jean Gillespie were also a great source of pleasure. But for some reason or other R. W. Rowan and his SPY MASTER refuse to get under my skin. The story's fairly interesting, but it lacks something. Guess it's punch. Everard Jason! He has a little gold mine in the back of the book, and WE TELL OUR READERS lends an air of interest to the story itself.

Keep up the good work and lay off the out-an'-out tragedy and wholesale murders. *Secundus,* let's have a little more of the brainy thief. I guess each of us is a bit of a thief at heart. Good luck to you!

Very truly yours,
FRANK J. OTT, JR.,
Brooklyn, N. Y.

DEAR EDITOR:

I have been a lover of mystery and detective stories for many years. I have tried out many different magazines, but when I discovered MYSTERY STORIES I knew I had found what I wanted.

In the February issue I greatly enjoyed TREATY MONEY, by Leslie McFarlane, and THE INITIATION DEATH, by R. D. Kingslyn. I can truthfully say that the only story I didn't like was THE SEVENTH STRIPE.

Wishing MYSTERY STORIES the great success it deserves, I am,

Very sincerely yours,
M. C. PANKAKE,
Kimball, Minn.

DEAR EDITOR:

As a constant reader of your magazine, I wish to say how much I enjoy its varied contents. Two of the stories in the February issue are, in my opinion, above the average—namely, MISS JUDAS and THE BLUE VASE.

MISS JUDAS is something *new*—the smart, cool, calm woman outwits the thief in a most interesting way. And in THE BLUE VASE, mystery and art are finely balanced. For years I have studied other races, and since I have visited the "Flowery Kingdom," the story held my attention to the end.

But these are not the only good stories in this month's issue. MYSTERY STORIES is holding its own. Its stories are not like others. There's a distinctiveness which is very pleasing.

With regards,
ARTHUR GROWDEN, Literary Editor,
The Commercial Dispatch,
Columbus, Ohio.

DEAR EDITOR:

Let me congratulate you on your selection of stories for the January number. They are not only of high quality, but the variety is excellent—almost any one can find his favorite type of mystery yarn between your covers.

But for myself I prefer the weird, creepy tales of the bizarre and grotesque—the masterful kind, filled with an atmosphere of gripping awe, and productive of many shudders. Not the cheap, trashy, disgusting, overdone type, in which we are forced to wade through buckets of blood, but quality stories of weird beauty, or refined studies in horror. THE LILY GARDEN in this number is a fine example.

Give us something thrilling, shivery, spellbinding. Such as a Poe or a Hoffmann would write.

Give us some of these tales in MYSTERY STORIES, even if you have to raise the price, as we can not find satisfactory fiction of this type on the market.

What do you other readers think about this?

Hopingly yours,
HARRY TROW,
Beverly, Mass.

The Universal University

THE Greeks said—"Know Thyself." To-day we add to this commandment a new statement—"Know Thy Job." And the last is almost as important as the first.

The organizations whose advertisements appear below and on the following pages offer their services to you so that you may get the most out of yourself and your job. You should read over what they have to offer, determine what line of work you want to specialize in, and then write to those who offer training in the particular field you select.

A few hours spent each week in study of your special field will make you more valuable, not only to yourself, but to your employer as well. And it is your value that sets your salary.

FOREST RANGERS

MEN, get Forest Ranger job; $125-$200 mo. and home furnished; hunt. fish, trap, etc. For details write Norton Inst., 2890 Temple Court, Denver, Col.

DETECTIVE

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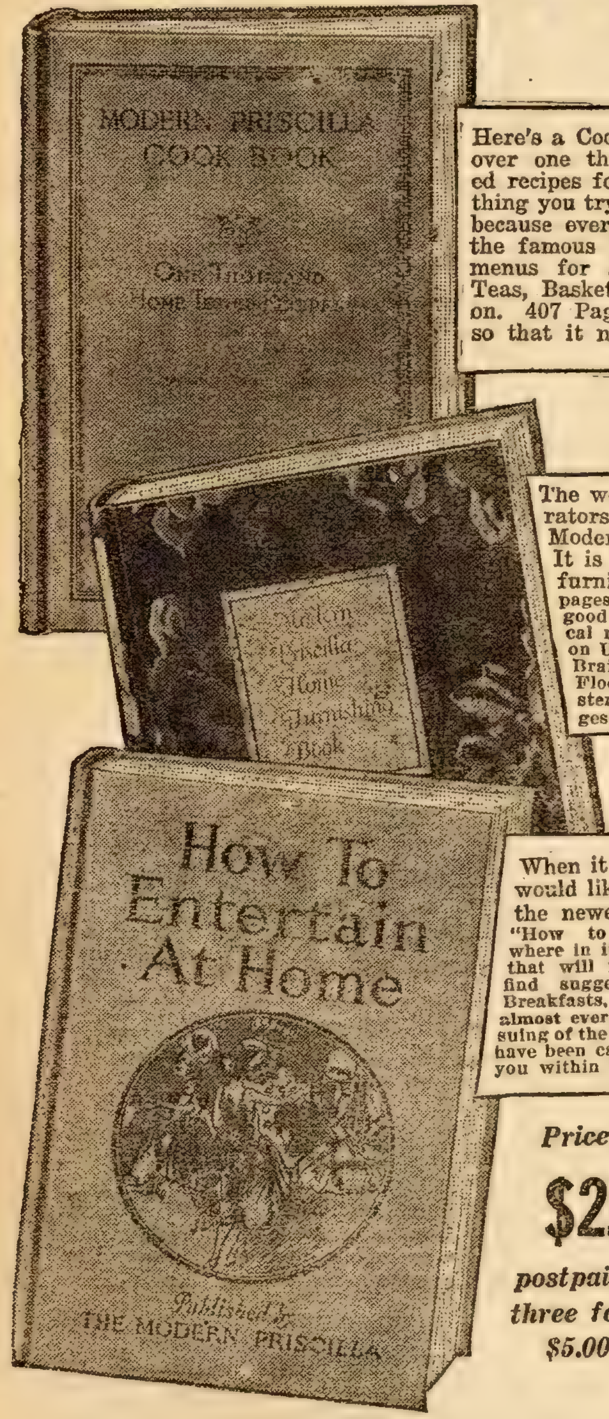
ROCHESTER, N. Y.

Sirs: Rush to me without charge copy of 32-page book, "How to get U. S. Government Jobs," with sample coaching; list of positions obtainable and full particulars telling how to get them.

Name ....

Address ....



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Published by THE MODERN PRISCILLA

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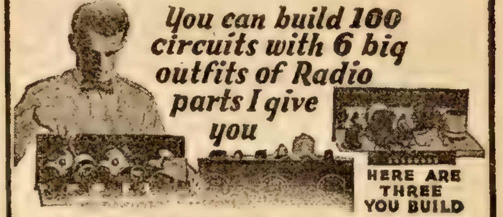
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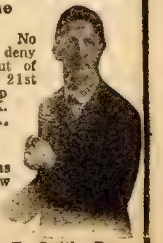

That's what many of my students make. No need to pinch pennies, scrimp along and deny yourself good things. Pay your tuition out of spare time earnings. G. W. Page, 1807 21st Ave., Nashville, Tenn., writes: "I picked up $835 in my spare time while studying." K. W. Griffith, 2320 Maple St., Little Rock., Ark., made $894.

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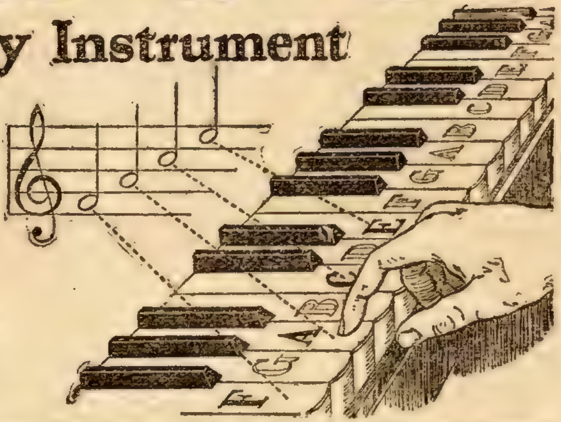
You Can Play Any Instrument In a Few Months This Delightful New Easy Way!



Quickest because natural and pleasant. Grateful students say they learn in a fraction of the time old dull methods required. You play direct from the notes. And the cost averages only a few cents a lesson!

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No Tricks or Stunts—You Learn from "Regular" Music

You don't have to know the first thing about music in order to begin. You learn to play from actual notes, just like the best musicians do. And almost before you realize your progress, you begin playing real tunes and melodies instead of just scales. There are no trick "numbers," no "memory stunts." When you finish the U. S. School of Music course, you can pick up any piece of regular printed music and understand it! You'll be able to read music, popular and classic, and play it from the notes. You'll acquire a life-long ability to please your friends, amuse yourself, and, if you like, make money (musicians are highly paid for their pleasant work).

Whether you like the piano, violin, 'cello, organ, saxophone, or any other instrument, you can now learn to play it in an amazingly short time. By means of this wonderful newly perfected method reading and playing music is made almost as simple as reading aloud from a book. You simply can't go wrong. First, you are *told* how a thing is done, then a picture *shows* you how, then you do it yourself and *hear* it. No private teacher could make it any clearer. The lessons come to you by mail at regular intervals. They consist of complete printed instructions, diagrams, all the music you need, and music paper for writing out test exercises. And if anything comes up which is not *entirely plain,* you can write to your instructor and get a full, prompt, personal reply!

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Beautiful Quartered Oak foot-power machine — same price — same terms — send $2.00 for 10 days' Free Trial.

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The New Priscilla is a quality machine throughout—Beautiful *Quartered Oak* Woodwork — Glossy *Black Enameled* Ironwork—and a *Life-time Guarantee* that protects you.

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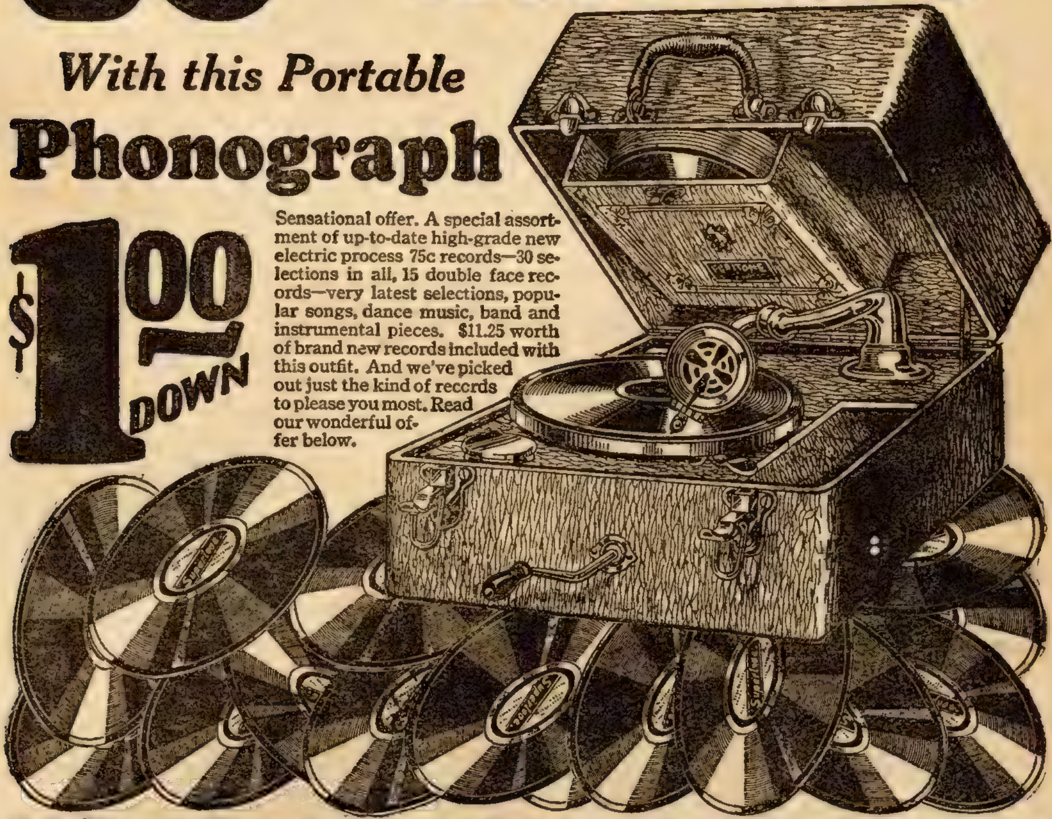
With this Portable Phonograph

$1.00 DOWN

Sensational offer. A special assortment of up-to-date high-grade new electric process 75c records—30 selections in all, 15 double face records—very latest selections, popular songs, dance music, band and instrumental pieces. $11.25 worth of brand new records included with this outfit. And we've picked out just the kind of records to please you most. Read our wonderful offer below.



30 Days Trial Yes, we will send this Puritone portable phonograph outfit, with 30 high grade selections, 15 double face 75c records to your home on 30 days trial for only $1.00 with the coupon. Use it as your own and see what a wonderful convenience it is to have a phonograph that you can carry from room to room. Use the outfit on 30 days trial. If within 30 days you decide not to keep the outfit, send it back and we'll refund your $1.00 plus all transportation charges.

$2.60 a month If you keep it, pay only $2.60 a month until you have paid—only $26.85. Think of it, a first-class high grade phonograph, and 15 high grade up-to-date double face records—(30 selections) a complete outfit, ready to play, only $26.85.

Send Coupon Now

Seize this opportunity on this special sale, while it lasts. Only $1.00 with the coupon brings the complete outfit on 30 days trial.

FREE CATALOG
of home furnishings sent with or without order. See coupon.

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This Portable Phonograph plays any make of 10-inch disc records including Edison and plays two ten-inch records with one winding. Weighs only 17 pounds. Comes in waterproof imitation leather case with hinged lid, closes up like a small suitcase with snap locks and carrying handle (see illustration.) Measures 14½ x 7½ inches. Records are placed inside of lid and secured so they will not rattle or break. Holds 15 records. Has quiet spring motor, tone arm and reproducer with indestructible diaphragm and wide throat for full sound volume. Reproducer is reversible for Edison records. Outfit includes 15 double face 75c *New Electric Process* records—30 selections. A complete record library without buying a single one! Shpg. weight, packed about 25 lbs.

Order by No. W8824JA; only $1.00 with coupon, $2.60 monthly Total price $26.85.

Straus & Schram, Dept. 2864 **Chicago, Ill.**

Enclosed find $1.00. Ship special advertised Puritone Portable Phonograph with 15 Double Face 75c *New Electric Process* records—30 selections. I am to have 30 days free trial. If I keep the outfit I will pay you $2.60 monthly. If not satisfied, I am to return the phonograph and records within 30 days and you are to refund my dollar and express charges I paid.

Puritone Portable Phonograph and 15 Double Face Records, W8824JA, $26.85

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is now more than ever the keynote of success, both in social and business life. *Bow-legged* and *Knock-Kneed men and women,* both young and old, will be glad to hear that my new appliance will successfully straighten, within a short time, bow-leggedness and knock-kneed legs, safely, quickly and permanently, without pain, operation or discomfort. Worn at night. My new "Lim-Straitner," Model 18, U. S. Patent, is easy to adjust; its result will soon save you from further humiliation, and improve your personal appearance 100 per cent. (Model 18 is not like old-fashioned splints or braces, with bothersome straps, hard to adjust, but a scientific, modern device of proven merit, used and recommended for the last 7 years by physicians everywhere.)

Write today for particulars, testimonials, and my free copyrighted physiological and anatomical book which tells you how to correct bow and knock-kneed legs without any obligation. Enclose a dime for postage.

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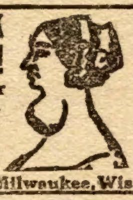

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Open Legs, Ulcers, Enlarged Veins, Goiter, Eczema healed while you work. Write for Free Book "How to Heal My Sore Legs at Home." Describe your case. **A. C. LIEPE PHARMACY,**
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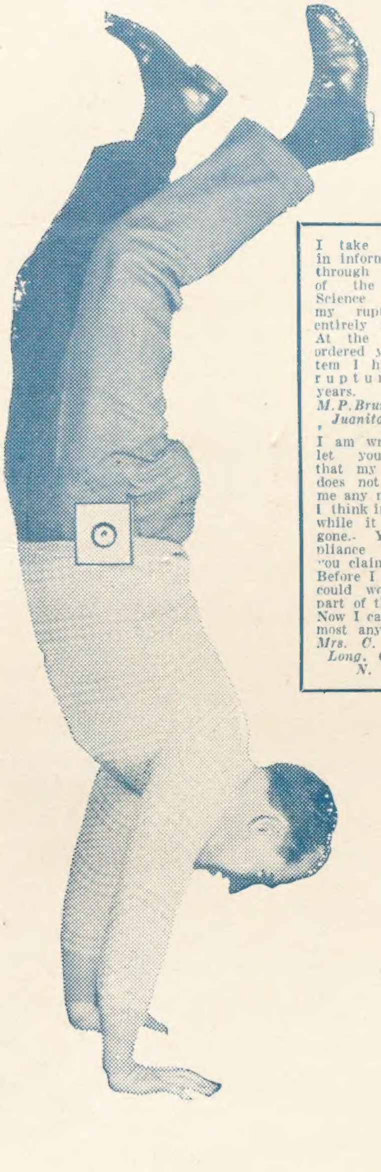
Button Rupture Newest Way

[Without Pressure]



I take pleasure in informing you through the use of the New Science System my rupture is entirely relieved. At the time I ordered your System I had been ruptured 20 years.
M. P. Brumbaugh, Juanita, Pa.

I am writing to let you know that my rupture does not trouble me any more and I think in a little while it will be gone. Your appliance has all you claim for it. Before I got it I could work only part of the time. Now I can do almost anything.
Mrs. C. W. De Long, Gilboa, N. Y.

SCIENCE now advises discarding cruel steel springs, barbarous leg straps, and other harness that press against the rupture and thus prevent nature from healing it. A new sensible method has been perfected, after thousands of test cases, called Magic Dot—entirely different from any other way. Instead of "pressing" it "seals" rupture, and of course allows users to run, jump, bend and cough in perfect safety.

BREATHES AIR

With this 1-25th oz. device is a new kind of pad, airporous and washable. It actually breathes air, and cannot slip off the rupture—a feature, you'll frankly admit, that is lacking in your present appliance. In fact, it is so superior and different that it is praised by physicians as "an entirely new departure." Users report they have forgotten they are wearing it. But don't buy it yet.

SEE IT FIRST

By a special arrangement you can now have it sent to your home without obligation to wear it. Don't send a penny or order it now. Just mail the coupon for full description of "Magic Dot" and details of this unusual offer. Act now for quick relief. Write your name and address on the coupon and mail it today!

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Please send me free your illustrated book and sample of Airtex. Include also your offer which permits me to see the New Science System without cost or obligation.

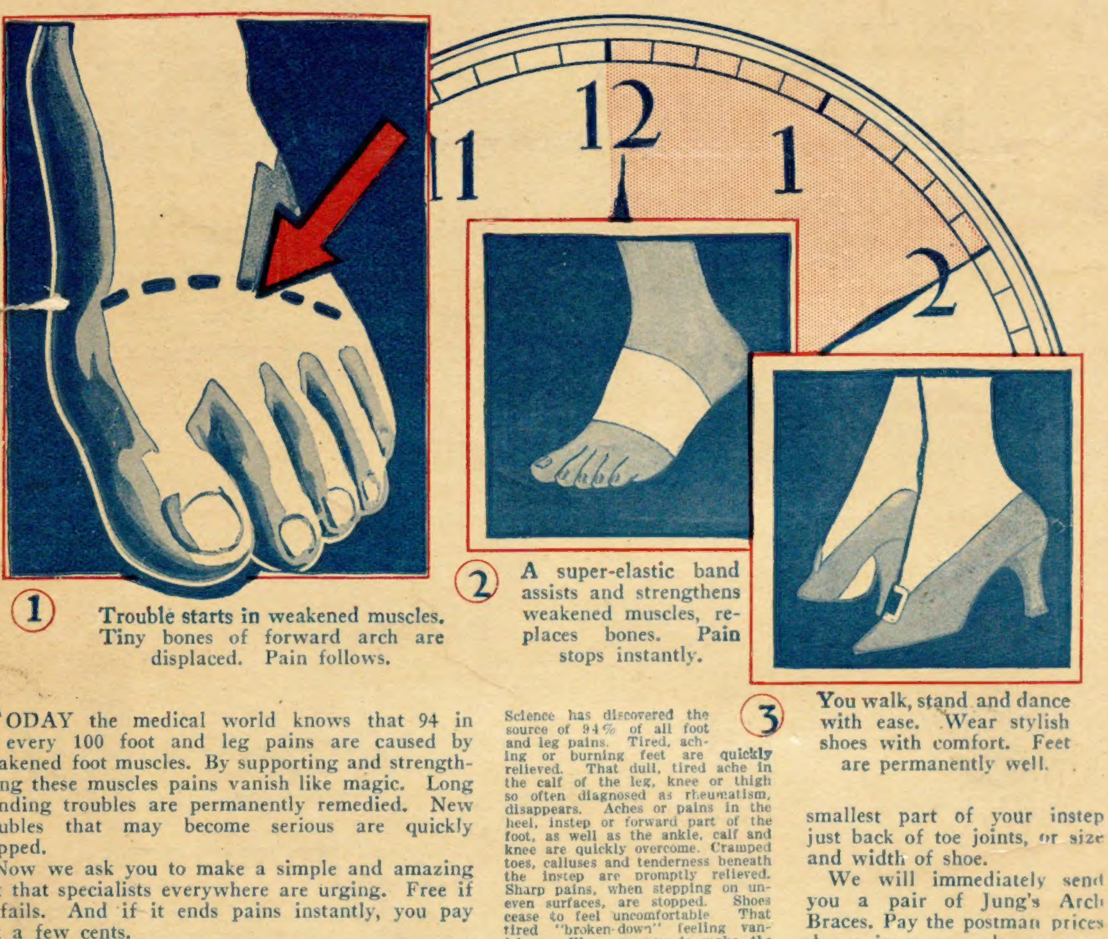
Name ....

Address ....

City.............................. State.............

Foot Pains Go

IN 10 MINUTES



① Trouble starts in weakened muscles. Tiny bones of forward arch are displaced. Pain follows.

② A super-elastic band assists and strengthens weakened muscles, replaces bones. Pain stops instantly.

③ You walk, stand and dance with ease. Wear stylish shoes with comfort. Feet are permanently well.

Science has discovered the source of 94% of all foot and leg pains. Tired, aching or burning feet are quickly relieved. That dull, tired ache in the calf of the leg, knee or thigh so often diagnosed as rheumatism, disappears. Aches or pains in the heel, instep or forward part of the foot, as well as the ankle, calf and knee are quickly overcome. Cramped toes, calluses and tenderness beneath the instep are promptly relieved. Sharp pains, when stepping on uneven surfaces, are stopped. Shoes cease to feel uncomfortable. That tired "broken-down" feeling vanishes. *We urge you to make the amazing 10-minute test explained here.*

TODAY the medical world knows that 94 in every 100 foot and leg pains are caused by weakened foot muscles. By supporting and strengthening these muscles pains vanish like magic. Long standing troubles are permanently remedied. New troubles that may become serious are quickly stopped.

Now we ask you to make a simple and amazing test that specialists everywhere are urging. Free if it fails. And if it ends pains instantly, you pay but a few cents.

No rigid plates. You wear the most stylish shoes.

Difficult as foot troubles might seem to correct, science offers you a simple yet astonishingly effective remedy. A thin, light super-elastic band is provided, known as the Jung Arch Brace. It stops pain in 10 minutes. And is recommended by scientists as the greatest foot corrective adjunct of the age. The secret of its success lies in its correct tension and stretch, in its scientific contour and design.

For severe cases a soft calfskin pocket containing an exceedingly soft cushion rubber lift is attached to the brace and is urgently advised. Slip it on, that is all.

Pain stops like magic. Stand, run or dance with delight—wear stylish shoes comfortably.

Nothing stiff to further weaken and cause discomfort. Nothing to mis-shape shoe. For at best rigid supports merely offer temporary relief. But on this new principle results are pemanent. Soon band may be discarded. Feet are well to stay.

Make this amazing 10-minute test

Go to any druggist, shoe dealer or chiropodist and be fitted with a pair of Jung Arch Braces. Make this free test. If not delighted with the instant and lasting relief, take them back and every penny will be returned.

If your dealer hasn't them, we will supply you. Send us measurement of foot taken with a half-inch strip of paper around the smallest part of your instep just back of toe joints, or size and width of shoe.

We will immediately send you a pair of Jung's Arch Braces. Pay the postman prices shown in coupon plus postage. Postage prepaid if money accompanies order.

For severe cases, we recommend the cushion lift styles. Wear them two weeks. It not delighted, we will send every penny back immediately.

Write for this free booklet

Write to us for our free book, illustrated with X-Ray views of feet. Tells all about the cause and correction of foot troubles.

FREE if it fails

Jung Arch Brace Co. 5-D Jung Bldg., Cincinnati, Ohio
Send one pair of braces marked below:
(Persons over 145 lbs. require long braces)

FOR *SEVERE* CASES —with cushion lift	FOR *MILD* CASES —without cushion lift
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City.................................State...............

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APRIL, 1928

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